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**SEEING THROUGH STATE SOCIAL WORK:
WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES
IN STATUTORY SETTINGS**

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‘How’s the PhD going’?

Next time I see them, I can say,

‘It’s gone’.

DECLARATION

In accordance with paragraph 3.5 of the University of Warwick's 'Guidelines on the Presentation and Examination of the Thesis', I wish to declare that the following publication arose from work on the thesis:

'Feminist Social Work and the State: A British Perspective'. In Lešnick B. (ed.) (1999) Social Work and the State: International Perspectives in Social Work. Pavilion, Brighton.

DEFINITIONS

The term 'Black' is used to refer to people who experience racism on the basis of their skin colour.

The term 'Asian' refers to people who have an ethnicity which is identified as having originated in the Indian sub-continent. It does not refer necessarily to their place of birth or nationality.

The term 'African-Caribbean' refers to people who have an ethnicity which is identified as having originated in the islands of the Caribbean. Again, it does not refer necessarily to their place of birth or nationality.

SUMMARY

The thesis begins with a review of the feminist social work literature, setting out four key issues: the immersion of women social workers in feminist social work identity, the creation of egalitarian relationships with women service users, the goal of empowerment and the neglect of the statutory context. Research questions are generated in the process of discussing these themes, with a view to beginning to redress the paucity of empirical research in this area. The state is then explored as crucial to developing an understanding of the characteristics and the operation of social work. The advent of managerialism in state social work is presented as the locus in which women social workers' experiences are grounded and practice possibilities are constructed. The thesis moves on to consider the mainstreaming of gender in the reform of social work education undertaken by CCETSW. These developments in social work education are seen as consistent with trends in state social work more generally. The methods used in the case study are introduced and the data this case study produced are discussed in relation to: women social workers' identities, identifications and stances; egalitarian relationships and empowerment; and managerialism. The thesis concludes by summarising its findings and drawing out their implications for future research and practice based on accommodations between women social workers and state social work.

INTRODUCTION

‘Any intellectual endeavour has a personal side, even if this is rarely articulated’ (Showstack-Sassoon 1987: 16).

A GROWING SENSE OF UNEASE

The focus for this thesis started life as ‘feminist social work in statutory settings’. My interest in this area can be traced to the late 1970s, when I was a trainee social worker in a Social Services Department. That interest developed further during my qualifying social work course at the beginning of the 1980s. As a trainee social worker and as a social work student, I read the limited amount of feminist social work literature which was available at that time, alongside being involved in feminist activism, some of which was within social work.

Post-qualification, my interest in feminist social work continued, as a residential social worker in a mental health setting. The staff team in this setting consisted, in the main, of a strong group of women (and two pro-feminist men) who shared a commitment to gendering mental health social work. We were keen to develop our understanding of women’s mental health - of what were seen by male psychiatrists as women’s personal problems or illnesses - in an alternative direction. We regarded the women’s ‘problems’ (always pronounced in the staff team with an ironic inflection) as a product of their experiences of societal oppression. We sought to develop this alternative stance to the medical model in an open way with women service users and this resulted in some blurring of roles between service users and staff. For example, in what now seems like a bygone age, during the residential social workers’ dispute the service users actively

supported intermittent strike action by staff, by undermining senior managers' attempts to maintain business as usual.

This commitment to gendering social work continued and broadened when I worked as a generic field social worker in a local authority Social Services Department. In addition to undertaking individual casework in this setting, I worked with other women social workers to bring together women service users on the basis of a feminist understanding of how the personal difficulties they faced were generated and could be addressed more collectively. Subsequently, as a hospital social worker and as a social worker in an adoption and fostering unit, my sense that gender was a significant dimension of social work practice was extended still further.

Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, I read more feminist social work literature as it appeared. This literature provided accounts of how women's problems were constructed and critiqued their depiction in mainstream social work. However, attempting to move beyond feminist accounts and into being, as it were, an 'actually-existing-feminist-social-worker' in each of my jobs, proved to be more problematic than I had anticipated. Overall, I was left with a feeling of unease about my credentials as a 'true' feminist social worker and a feeling of having failed to practice 'real' feminist social work on a consistent basis. This feeling is captured by Wise:

'There are very many feminist practitioners in the field who have become guilty about not being able to live up to this Utopian vision of the empowering model of feminist social work, because the theory simply does not match the reality of their working lives...the empowerment model

of feminist social work may be de-skilling and disempowering feminist and pro-feminist social workers: it sets them up to fail' (Wise 1995: 113).

We will return to the place of the empowerment model in the feminist social work literature in Chapter One, but for now will remain with the feelings of unease and failure.

FAILURE OR BEING FAILED?

I began to address these feelings of unease and failure and moved towards questioning feminist social work, rather than myself, whilst undertaking a Women's Studies programme in the early 1990s. I used my participation in the programme, in part, to re-read the feminist social work literature and to reconsider the ways in which feminist social workers related their experiences to that literature.

Re-reading the literature served to highlight the primacy accorded to feminist social work as an affiliation and alignment which was the primary basis for a personal and political identity, seen as infusing the totality of the 'true' feminist social worker's practice. This explained the discomfort I experienced about whether I was a 'true' feminist social worker; there were times when I did not feel that I was immersed in a feminist identity. Feminism was not infusing my work in the all-encompassing sense which the literature conveyed. An alternative, and less self-blaming, way of putting this is that the feminist social work literature did not capture the tensions and ambiguities of my experiences or those of other women social workers to whom I talked. The more I went into this, the more the accounts of 'feminist social work' in the literature appeared to have been

developed largely in the absence of research into the immediate experiences of women social workers like myself.

Following the completion of the Women's Studies programme, I was working in a University Department. As I began to try to pull together where I had reached in my thinking about feminist social work as the starting point for further study, four particular points of tension seemed to exist between academic and experiential accounts of being a feminist social worker.

First, as I have noted above, in the literature a woman social worker's feminist identity is taken as the given and unproblematic base from which to launch feminist social work. In contrast, women social workers' anecdotal accounts of their experiences of feminist identity were of identities which were fluid, sometimes fragile or even non-existent. Such accounts were close to my own experience.

Second, in the literature the identification of commonality of experiences between feminist social workers and women service users was regarded as the basis upon which feminists could work non-hierarchically and non-oppressively with service users in egalitarian relationships. The direct experience of women social workers seemed to question the extent to which gender served as the basis for commonality of experiences and interests with women service users, as suggested by the literature, and questioned whether egalitarian relationships were feasible.

Third, in the literature the goal of egalitarian relationships with women service users was expressed confidently as being concerned with their

empowerment, whereas in practice there seemed to be a lack of clarity about what empowerment meant.

Fourth, formulation of proposals for feminist social work in the literature tended to ignore or play down the impact of the statutory framework within which women social worker/women service user relationships were situated. Yet many women social workers seemed acutely conscious of encountering constraints when working in a statutory agency.

ADJUSTING AND RE-ADJUSTING THE FOCUS

Having reached the point of articulating for myself these four points of tension between academic and experiential accounts of being a feminist social worker, the original aim of the thesis was to explore the problems and possibilities of 'feminist social work within statutory settings', with particular reference to the points of tension. However, I began to question whether 'feminist social work' itself was an appropriate focus as I became more aware of literature which embraced other critical perspectives in relation to social work, centred around other social divisions. These doubts were reinforced by the dearth of women social workers still calling themselves feminist social workers in the 1990s, even though there were women social workers around who regarded themselves as attempting to address women's interests.

In order to test out my misgivings, I asked two women, working in a Social Services Department, if they would be willing to talk with me. One was a Black woman, who was a senior practitioner working in the field of community care. The other was a white disabled woman, working with disabled service

users. Although both said that women's issues were prominent in their experience of social work, the term 'feminist social work' did not capture the sense they had of their commitment to addressing women's interests. The Black woman social worker said that she did not identify with the term 'feminist social worker' and could not think of any Black women colleagues who would use this term to describe themselves. The white disabled woman social worker said that although she did identify with the term 'feminist' to some extent, feminism was only a small part of how she saw her identity as a woman and her interest in women's issues within social work. She, too, indicated that she would not consider herself to be a 'feminist social worker'. My misgivings grew as a result of these two in-depth conversations. My tendency up until this point to use 'feminist' as representing women's interests was clearly problematic:

'Although a feminist approach is almost definitionally one which starts out from women's experiences, most women are not feminists and would not necessarily agree with accounts of the social world generated from a feminist stance' (Maynard 1994: 16).

If this was the case, I needed to look for a basis from which the research could be approached. There seemed to be three options from which to choose.

First, to continue to focus on 'feminist social work', notwithstanding the limitations of such a focus considered above. I did not regard this an acceptable option because Black and other women who regarded themselves as addressing women's interests would probably be deterred from participating in the research, with the result that their experiences would be excluded from the thesis.

Second, to move the focus of the research to critical social work perspectives, thus broadening the thesis to encompass a range of social divisions, perhaps with a focus on anti-oppressive or anti-discriminatory practice or some other more general perspective. The consequence of this approach would have been to produce a thesis which would have been fragmented as it considered a series of social divisions and which would have lacked a coherent and central concern with women.

I decided on a third option: to focus on women social workers' experiences in statutory settings, rather than on feminist social work in those settings. This option retained the focus on women social workers but in a way that opened up the research to constituencies of women who might understand their experiences in social work in ways other than those signified by 'feminist social work'. It allowed for 'diverse material realities...and the perspectives those realities generate' (Stanley and Wise 1990: 44) from a range of women's standpoints (Harding 1990: 96; 1991; Stanley and Wise 1990: 39; Collins 1991; Asfar and Maynard 1994; Stanley and Wise 1994) to be encompassed in the research. At the same time, it was an option which did not exclude any women social workers who designated themselves as 'feminist social workers'.

In order to maximise the likelihood of the women social workers who participated in the research being those who were influenced by critical perspectives which encompassed addressing women's interests, I decided to invite participation from women social workers who had completed a CCETSW-validated Practice Teaching Programme. Such participants would be expected to consider addressing women's interests as part of their practice teacher training.

They would also encounter such perspectives through their contact with DipSW Programmes and through having DipSW students with them on placement, as they reflected with students on the ways in which oppression was manifested in the work setting. In other words, a ‘best case scenario’ was being sought for the research by inviting participation from women social workers who: were interested in addressing women’s interests in social work; had had the opportunity to have time out from their workplaces to reflect on perspectives which might inform addressing women’s interests; and were expected to continue exploring issues arising from those perspectives in their work with students.

FOCUS AND FRAMEWORK

The focus of the thesis was now on assessing how a feminist programme for social work, primarily articulated through academic texts, had fared in practice, using a ‘grounded analysis of women’s material realities’ (Stanley and Wise 1983: 25) as social workers in statutory settings. This focus brought my framework for the thesis back to the four issues which I had previously identified as points of tension, at the outset of thinking about undertaking a PhD. They were now formulated slightly differently in order to encompass the change in focus.

First, in the feminist social work literature, feminist identity in social work is seen as largely unproblematic. Following my change of focus, the assumption of a specific ‘feminist social work’ identity had been replaced by a concern with uncovering women social workers’ experiences of their identifications and stances.

Second, commonality of experience is regarded in the literature as the basis for feminist social work with women service users, pursued through the creation of egalitarian relationships. As a consequence of the change of focus, examining how women social workers experienced their relationships with women service users now came to the fore.

Third, the goal of empowerment needed to be explored in terms of what empowerment meant for women social workers.

Fourth, examination of the statutory context, within which women social worker/women service user relationships are situated, became a key dimension in locating, understanding and theorising women social workers' experiences. When that statutory setting was explored (see Chapter Two), the significance of the state context in understanding women social workers' experiences became central and shifted the thesis from an emphasis on 'statutory settings' or 'the statutory context' to a concern with 'state social work'.

A final element in the framework for the thesis was provided by developments in social work education. Having decided to invite women social workers who had completed a CCETSW-validated Practice Teaching Programme to participate in the research, I began to read about the changes which had taken place in social work education. Initially this reading was directed at understanding the work in which the women who participated in the research were engaged as practice teachers. However, I began to see the developments in social work education more broadly as another dimension of the impact of the state context on social work.

DEVELOPMENTS, DESTINATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

The preceding discussion of the development of the focus and framework for the thesis allows the aim of the thesis now to be expressed as the contextualisation and consideration of women social workers' experiences in state social work. In order to reach this destination, the thesis is structured into three sections, which provide the directions:

Section A 'Contextualising Women Social Workers' Experiences of State Social Work'.

Section B 'Considering Women Social Workers' Experiences of State Social Work'.

Section C 'Concluding from Women Social Workers' Experiences of State Social Work'.

In following these directions, the thesis is about 'Seeing Through State Social Work' - in three senses. The thesis is concerned with state social work as seen through (-viewed from the vantage point of-) women social workers' experiences. In considering those experiences, the thesis reveals women social workers seeing through (- persevering with-) state social work, in the face of the difficulties and constraints it presents. Finally, the thesis suggests the need to see through (-pass beyond-) the immediate, everyday, surface appearance of state social work and to uncover its defining characteristics, if women social workers are to reach accommodations with it.

SECTION A

CONTEXTUALISING WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF STATE SOCIAL WORK

Section A provides three strands of contextualisation of women social workers' experiences.

Chapter One begins the contextualisation of women social workers' experiences with a review of the feminist social work literature. This literature proposes a perspective and framework for women social workers' practice which is discussed here in relation to four key issues: identity, egalitarian relationships, empowerment and the statutory context. Research questions which are suggested by the literature review are highlighted in the course of the discussion.

Chapter Two explores state social work as the context within which women social workers' experiences are grounded and the practice possibilities for addressing the interests of women service users are formed. Social work is represented as an arm of the state's social policy and the position of women social workers within state policy is considered. Specific developments in social work's organisational regimes, which culminated in the managerialism associated with the state's reforms of social work in the 1990s, are discussed. These organisational regimes are regarded as a key contextual dimension in women social workers' experiences.

Chapter Three turns to social work education as an area of policy reform which has occurred in parallel with developments in state social work's organisational regimes. The interaction of social work education with the state,

mediated by CCETSW, resulted in social work education becoming a site on which issues of discrimination and oppression were debated, particularly in relation to the content of programmes leading to the award of the Diploma in Social Work qualification. (Practice teaching was also caught up in these developments.) The process of addressing women's interests in the mainstream is considered in relation to the reform of social work education and as the final strand in contextualising women social workers' experiences.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FEMINIST SOCIAL WORK LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

Graham identifies the middle of the 1970s as marking the beginning of feminist writing about social work (Graham 1992), with the late 1970s witnessing particular attention being focused on gender issues in Wilson's Women and the Welfare State (1977) and Statham's Radicals in Social Work (1978). Wilson's analysis places gender as central to an understanding of the development of the welfare state and provides a critique of the social control function of statutory social work, whilst Statham seeks to extend the radical social work agenda through an engagement with gender. Contributory chapters in other texts inject feminism into debates about radical social work (Wilson 1980; Hale 1984; Hudson 1989). Wilson makes a plea for feminist social workers to 'keep the political and the personal together' (Wilson 1980: 42); Hale calls for feminist social workers to engage in the articulation of the political nature of social work (Hale 1984: 167-168); and Hudson, in a retrospective consideration of the 'moment' of radical social work, concludes that 'feminism more than any other political credo...demonstrated some of the practical possibilities of working towards change in the "here and now"' (Hudson 1989: 73).

In the 1980s, there were publications centrally concerned with establishing the presence and distinctiveness of feminist social work in the UK (Brook and Davies 1985; Hudson 1985; Wise 1985; Hanmer and Statham 1988; Dominelli and McLeod 1989; Hallett 1989) and towards the end of the 1980s,

feminist social work was being included in the canon of social work's 'received ideas' (Rojek et al 1988). These developments were paralleled by publications in Australia (Marchant and Wearing 1986) and in the United States (Norman and Mancuso 1980; Bricker-Jenkins and Hooyman 1986; Van Den Bergh and Cooper 1986; Collins 1986; Burden and Gottlieb 1987; Morrell 1987; Nes and Iadicola 1989)¹.

The current of work on feminist social work continued in the 1990s in the UK (Phillipson 1991; Langan and Day 1992; Cree 1995; Wise 1995; Cavanagh and Cree 1996; Hallett 1996; Hanmer and Statham 1999) and included chapters on feminist social work in general social work texts (Dominelli 1991; Hudson et al 1994; Wise 1995; Mullender 1997; Dominelli 1997a; Orme 1998), with further publications in the United States (Freeman 1990; Bricker-Jenkins, Hooyman and Gottlieb 1991; Roche 1998).

In addition, feminist perspectives were brought to bear on specific areas of practice in the UK, for example, child abuse (Hudson 1992; Milner 1993; Farmer and Boushel 1999; Fawcett and Featherstone 1995; Featherstone 1999), domestic violence (Mullender 1996; Humphreys 1999; Hague 1999) and community care (Walmsley 1997), as well as specific approaches to practice, for example, counselling (Cosis-Brown 1998; McLeod 1994) and groupwork (Butler and Wintram 1991; Mistry 1997).

The remainder of this chapter is concerned with a consideration of this burgeoning feminist social work literature in relation to the four themes identified in the Introduction to the thesis: feminist social work identity,

¹ This thesis is concerned with feminist social work in the UK. A brief discussion of developments in the United States and Australia is provided in Appendix One.

egalitarian relationships, empowerment and the statutory context. In the course of the discussion, it will become clear that the feminist social work literature has developed largely in isolation from explicit scrutiny of the practice experiences of women social workers and without recourse to empirical research. Therefore, at the end of each of the sections on the four themes around which the chapter is organised, the questions which emerge for research are highlighted.

FEMINIST SOCIAL WORK IDENTITY

An eclectic approach

Within much of the literature it is assumed that there is a feminist social work identity which can be readily accessed by women social workers and which can incorporate their identifications, affiliations and aspirations. For the most part, this remains an unstated assumption, serving as a foundation on which the literature's other themes are constructed. When this theme surfaces, women social workers are seen as being totally immersed in their feminist social work identity. For example, Hudson et al stress the 'feminist emphasis on the invariable influence of our values and how they inescapably permeate all that we do both professionally and personally' (Hudson et al 1994: 96). Similarly, the Birmingham Women and Social Work Group hold that feminism is both a personal and political commitment and that it cannot be utilised or discarded on a whim (Birmingham Women and Social Work Group 1985: 119).

Opening up access to the immersion of women social workers in this feminist social work identity is undertaken in a particular way. It is common for the diverse origins of feminist social work to be mentioned, with little precision

about their legacy and a broad measure of consensus about the open-ended eclectic nature of feminist social work. For example, in an early example of this eclecticism, Hale acknowledges a broad range of feminist perspectives. She emphasises the common ground they share, namely, 'consciousness of the inequality which women experience in relation to men and, resulting from this awareness, a desire to redress the balance and to remedy the injustices' (Hale 1984: 168). In similar vein, Dominelli and McLeod regard feminist social work as being informed by Marxism, socialism and liberalism (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 27). However, their contributions can be condensed into

'a very simple idea: that there are not two sorts of people in the world, the superior and the inferior, or in terms of power relations, the dominant and the subordinate. We are all equal irrespective of our gender. Social relations that obliterate this fact must therefore be transformed and recreated in ways that reflect equality in terms of gender' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 1).

Dominelli extends the origins of feminist social work to liberal, radical, socialist and Black feminisms. She concludes that these perspectives are united by their commitment to the elimination of gender inequality and sees them as having a set of five principles in common (Dominelli 1992: 85). Elsewhere Dominelli stresses that liberal, radical, socialist, anti-racist and postmodernist feminisms have nine common characteristics which inform feminist social work's theory and practice, premised upon taking 'gendered inequality and its elimination as the starting point for working with women' (Dominelli 1997a: 245).

In arguing for this eclectic approach² to the definition of feminist social work identity, Reynolds suggests that liberal, radical and socialist feminisms cover a wide spectrum of debate but they share 'a questioning of notions that a woman's place is primarily in the home; that women should have the main responsibility for child-rearing; and that women are naturally suited to low-paid and low-status caring work' (Reynolds 1997: 74). She sees the eclectic approach which she shares with other writers as, what she terms, an 'evangelising' strategy:

'It is in the interests of the development of feminist practice to have as many women as possible thinking of themselves as feminists. This has led feminist social work academics to stress the breadth of possibilities offered by feminism: the common goals rather than the different purposes' (Reynolds 1997: 82).

This evangelising strategy is evident in Hale's approach. With reference to her identification of the common ground of feminist social work, referred to above, she states that if her definition appears bland and impotent, then this is because it has been deliberately designed to emphasise the unity of feminist stances so that those women who have not identified themselves with feminism as a political perspective, but who have some consciousness of women's inferior status and a desire to remedy it, will feel included in feminist social work (Hale

² An exception to the eclectic approach is Comley's socialist-feminist contribution, which sees feminist social work in statutory settings as combining class antagonism and gender conflict: 'State services cannot be comprehended as unambiguously benign, nor as unequivocally oppressive. Rather, they constitute a contradictory unity which lends itself to analysis through reference to socialist and feminist theory. These theoretical frameworks reveal the state as a site of struggle and can be used to elucidate the structural location of state employees in this dynamic, as well as identifying the extent to which it is possible to implement practices which will challenge the state's oppressive tendencies' (Comley 1989 58).

1984: 168). Similarly, McNay suggests that feminist practitioners must show how their insights can be used by other workers who have yet to grasp the relevance of feminist analysis to the range of problems with which they are confronted (McNay 1992: 54).

Re-appraising eclecticism

In its early days, the women's movement stressed the inequalities between women and men, later moving on to emphasise 'diversity within the concept of "woman", which for feminist analysis had previously been accepted as a unitary category' (Langan 1992: 3-4, original emphasis). The consequences for feminist analysis have been depicted by some writers as far-reaching: 'An emphasis on difference has shattered the illusion of the homogeneity of, and sisterhood between, women, which previously characterised white, middle-class, Westernised feminist politics and analysis' (Asfar and Maynard 1994: 1).

This general trend within feminism has been reflected in the feminist social work literature, although arguably to a less pronounced extent:

'Particular groups of women (for example, black women, lesbians and women with disabilities) have developed critiques of the ways in which they are dominated by other women, including feminists. Consequently, by the mid-1980s, it had become clear that feminism's presumption of 'universal sisterhood' was a conceptual and organisational barrier to addressing unequal relationships among women. The tendency of many recent feminist critiques of social work practice (my own included) has undoubtedly been to focus on the commonalties of women's experiences

at the expense of recognising social divisions that uphold the power of some groups of women at the expense of others' (Hudson 1989 73).

From the late 1980s onwards, in addition to the overriding emphasis on an eclectic identity, forged in the fusion of a range of feminist perspectives, there are references to acknowledging differences amongst women (see, for example, Hanmer and Statham 1988: Ch. 1; Dominelli and McLeod 1989; Phillipson 1991: 17 and 38). Dominelli and McLeod, for example, highlight critiques of feminism arising from the experiences women have from standpoints within a range of social divisions; class, 'race', sexuality, disability and age (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 3-4). However, such references were seen as insufficient by Black, -lesbian and disabled women who criticised the dominant feminist paradigms for their racism, ethnocentrism and heterosexism (Watson 1994: 4-5). The articulation of 'other voices' in relation to feminist social work can be illustrated by drawing on examples in relation to 'race', disability and sexuality.

Black women's lives, and the specificity of their experiences, were regarded as remaining invisible or being distorted so that they fitted into a white mould (Carby 1982; Bryan et al 1985; Ramazanoglu 1986). These critiques were incorporated into social work (see, for example, Shah 1989; Watt and Cooke 1989; Lewis 1996):

'When white women write about women they often write only about themselves. When they occasionally write about black women they usually just incorporate them in a racist and ethnocentric way...white women have made black women mere appendages to the perspectives of white feminists (Shah 1989: 178).

This leads Watt and Cooke to argue that it is the experience of racism which is the crucial division between Black and white women. Black women share this experience with Black men and, in spite of their oppression by men, in the social work agenda racism remains a priority (Watt and Cooke 1989; 75).

The marginalisation and exclusion of women with disabilities in social work has been challenged by disabled women (Morris 1992, 1993; Begum 1994). Such writers highlight the importance of bringing disabled women's perspectives into social work: 'When we appear as a public issue it is usually in the way the non-disabled world defines us and our concerns and not in a way we wish to appear ourselves' (Morris 1993: 124). Begum insists that disability, whilst needing to be given greater prominence, should not be regarded in isolation from the experience of other social divisions and argues that the way disabilities are perceived and experienced is determined by the way the additional dimensions of 'race', gender, sexuality, class and age interconnect (Begum 1994: 21). She contends that Black disabled women do not experience forms of oppression separately or in a hierarchical structure and should not be asked to compartmentalise their experiences into discrete categories (Begum 1994: 18).

In relation to sexuality, Cosis-Brown maintains that the feminist social work literature has little, beyond generalities, to say about lesbians (Cosis-Brown 1992: 204). She argues that lesbians in social work are either ignored or seen solely in relation to their sexual orientation (Cosis-Brown 1992: 9). She queries this simplistic view of sexuality when she suggests that self-definition as lesbian is an ongoing series of difficult processes, which is different for different women (Cosis-Brown 1992: 202). Hillin considers that part of these difficult

processes is that some lesbian social workers still feel very vulnerable, about coming out as a lesbian in social work settings and, as a consequence, are continually on guard to avoid giving anything away which might reveal their sexuality (Hillin 1985: 18). Black lesbian social workers encounter even more pressures within social work organisations: 'Black women may not identify as lesbians in certain situations, making a rational choice about not wanting to take on racism and homophobia at the same time' (Cosis-Brown 1992: 202).

Refining eclecticism

In response to the sort of critiques which have been given as examples above, one stance taken in the feminist social work literature is to view such challenges as capable of being used to revise and extend feminist social work principles (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 2-3). Through this process of refinement, it is argued, critiques which reflect social divisions other than gender can be absorbed into feminist social work:

'A feminist stance endorses egalitarianism across all social dimensions. Therefore, feminists are also against other social divisions which reflect dominance and subordination such as race, class, heterosexism, ageism and "ablebodiedism"'; '...feminist responses to criticism of their theory and practice is sufficiently advanced to demonstrate that incorporated as a central feature of a feminist stance on social inequality is the rejection of all social divisions and not simply those based on gender' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 2/4).

This stance is indicated by some authors through the addition of embellishments to the term 'feminist social work': for example, 'anti-racist feminist social work' (Dominelli 1991), 'anti-racist socialist feminist social work' (Dominelli 1992), 'anti-racist feminist sociological social work' (Dominelli 1997b).

Thus, the inclusion of different women's experiences and standpoints is not seen as necessarily negating the integrity of the feminist social work agenda: 'Unity-diversity...encourages us to respect difference, preserve uniqueness, while also seeing similarities and wholeness' (Phillipson 1991: 18). Routes through to an eclectic identity can still be found. In relation to 'race', for example, feminists acknowledge that although Black and white women have considerable differences to contend with between them, they are also grappling with common causes, and that the principle of sisterhood need not be lost (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 30).

The emergence of greater complexity, from diverse women's standpoints, on to the feminist social work agenda is, therefore, often discussed in terms of how differences amongst women can be incorporated into feminist practice and ultimately transcended. Thus Cavanagh and Cree suggest that although a single feminist standpoint cannot adequately express the reality of women's lives, this does not mean that women do not have a common experience and a common goal to work towards (Cavanagh and Cree 1996: xxi). Hanmer and Statham see this recognition of commonality as the cornerstone of feminist social work and stress that their recognition of diversity is in the context of commonality (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 19).

Hudson et al warn that, as a result of this tendency towards stressing commonality, feminist social work has been castigated for being synonymous with the values and experiences of white, heterosexual and middle-class women (Hudson 1994: 9). Despite such warnings, the feminist social work literature tends to have an inclusive language on the whole, leading Graham to argue that 'feminist social work has yet to engage in a systematic way with the debates about difference and divisions among women..., masking "race", class, sexuality and disability as crucial dimensions of women's lives' (Graham 1992: 63).

Diverse identities

-In contrast with the view of feminist social work being capable of survival through its absorption of critiques made of it, Langan's stance seeks the kind of engagement which Graham sees as having been lacking. Langan begins by identifying the need to move beyond the limitations of the past in feminist social work through attempting to develop a wider, non-oppressive, anti-discriminatory form of social work theory and practice which recognises the complexity and diversity of the oppressions which affect women's lives (Langan 1992: 1). Rather than seeing feminist social work as capable of incorporating challenges from a range of oppressions, Langan argues for the necessity of constructing an anti-discriminatory social work from the

'growing recognition of the specificities of oppression according to gender, race, class, age, disability and sexual orientation. It emphasises the diversity of experience and the validity of each person's experience. It seeks to develop an understanding of both the totality of oppression and

its specific manifestations as the precondition for developing an anti-discriminatory practice relevant to all spheres of social work' (Langan 1992: 3).

Hudson encapsulates such an approach in the image of a kaleidoscope. Acknowledging that the pursuit of greater gender equality has sometimes been at the expense of recognising other oppressions, particularly those experienced by Black, lesbian and working class women, Hudson regards the dynamics and effects of oppression as kaleidoscopic configurations of, and relationships between, different forms of oppression which are constantly moving and changing (Hudson 1989 93). For reasons which we will come to later, in relation to egalitarian relationships and the statutory context, Wise reaches a similar conclusion about the need for the development of the more liberal approach of anti-discriminatory social work. Although informed by feminist analysis, this liberal approach would also draw on the analyses of other subjugated groups (Wise 1995: 113).

Having identified some of the challenges, from critiques of feminist social work, to the immersion of women social workers in an unproblematic feminist social work identity, we now turn to what is potentially a more fundamental challenge; that posed by the emergence of postmodernist perspectives which have cut across and through discussions of social divisions in social work (see, for example, Howe 1994; Parton 1994; Williams 1996; Leonard 1997; Parton and Marshall 1998; Pease and Fook 1999).

Splintered identities

In relation to feminist perspectives more generally, postmodernism has been regarded by some writers as embodying a major criticism of feminist adherence to 'grand theories'. The implication is that whilst postmodernism does not result in a narrative which subsumes women, neither does it accept feminist narratives which would accord primacy to women's oppression (Evans 1995: 125) Although it has been argued that thus far postmodernism has had little impact on social work practice (Featherstone and Fawcett 1995a: 34; 1995b), postmodernism's emphasis on diversity and difference has been discussed in relation to feminist social work. (See, for example, Featherstone and Fawcett's discussion of child sexual abuse [1995].)

Postmodernism is regarded as contributing to the undermining of universal sisterhood by its support for competing discourses around being a woman. In particular, postmodernism has questioned approaches which present either power or difference as fixed, clear-cut categories (Featherstone and Fawcett 1995a). Work on difference has attempted to move feminist social work away from universalist perspectives and towards seeing diversity as a resource rather than an obstacle. Accordingly, feminist social workers have been enabled to 'recognise and work with the ways in which they are divided as well as the ways in which they are united' (Featherstone and Fawcett 1995b: 9).

In contrast, Dominelli argues that the importance accorded to difference by postmodernism fragments feminist social work's foundation in an identity built on commonality (Dominelli 1997b: 39-40) and Hallett guards against the

danger that the recognition and celebration of diversity and difference, locality and specificity can obscure the structural positions of women (Hallett 1996: 10).

The category 'woman'

The challenges from the critiques of feminist social work raised earlier and the potential for a thorough-going reappraisal of feminist social work introduced by postmodernism raise fundamental questions for women social workers about whether and, if so, how the category of 'woman' should be retained. Drawing on Stanley (1990), Orme argues that

'not all women share the same state of being, nor does the state of being -exist in relation to something essentially female, but to the social construction of "women". This construction, and the oppressions identified within the construction, recognises many forms of women's existence or condition which are incorporated in it...thus allowing for the separate and different experiences of black women, lesbian women, disabled women and older women, for example' (Orme 1998: 226).

Similarly, Langan's concern is that recognising diversity among women should not detract from recognising the concept of 'woman' and the imbalance in power between women and men. However, the stress on diversity involves challenging the nature of power whoever holds it (Langan 1992: 5). In acknowledging the significant differences which exist between women, Hallett nevertheless holds that gender is still a crucial dimension and that the position of women should be central to the analysis of Social Services Departments, with women's needs and capacities at the forefront of planning and service delivery (Hallett 1989: xi-xii).

Stanley suggests that terms like 'women', 'feminism' and 'gender' are constructed in particular ways by women. Some women use them strategically, some women use them accidentally, whilst for others they are an indication of political and analytical intention. Stanley adds a note of caution about such categorisation: 'It should be recognised that a variety of terminological usages co-exist, sometimes indicating deep conceptual and political difference and disagreement, sometimes indicating nothing so much as casual choice' (Stanley 1997: 11). Notwithstanding her note of caution, Stanley suggests that terminology can help to identify different women's standpoints. A similar approach is taken by Reynolds who maintains that gender, feminism and women's experiences are interwoven for many feminists and that there may be strategic reasons for choosing one term rather than another (Reynolds 1994: 8).

Summary and questions for research

This section of the chapter has questioned the dominant view in the feminist social work literature that women social workers can align themselves with an all-embracing feminist identity as a stance from which to approach their work. The existence of diverse and splintered identities amongst women has suggested that the identities which women embrace will not necessarily be formed within the bounds of feminist social work, as depicted in the literature's dominant paradigm. They may, instead, be formulated within a more loosely defined stance of anti-discriminatory practice which does not necessarily preclude a focus on women. Thus the questions for research in relation to how women social workers define their identity and stance are:

- Do women social workers primarily align themselves with a feminist social work identity?
- Do they see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory practice?

EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Woman-to-woman

Many of the feminist social work texts emphasise the extent to which social work consists of women working with women (for example, Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 15, 106-107; Dominelli 1991: 197; 1997a: 249; 1997b: 85; Hanmer and Statham 1988: 3, 99-100; Brook and Davies 1985: 143; Hallett 1989: ix, Ch.1; Reynolds 1997: 74; Orme 1998: 218): 'Where state welfare services intervene in the personal and social problems individuals and families experience, it is mainly with and through women, as its agents, ministering to other women' (Davis and Brook 1985: 4). Even when the service user is male, it is often a woman who is on the receiving end of social work intervention (Hale 1984: 167; Hudson 1989: 78; Humphreys 1994).

This woman-to-woman relationship in social work has been the starting point for the most consistently advocated theme in the feminist social work literature: that a central task of feminist social workers is to create egalitarian relationships with women service users. Such relationships are seen as containing strong elements of recognition, mutuality and reciprocity on the basis of a shared, experience of oppression³. Feminist social work is regarded as

³ The only note of caution struck in the literature is that gender issues might be marginalised because 'The assumption is that gender issues are addressed by virtue of the presence of a predominantly female work-force and clientele' (Dominelli 1991: 183).

prefiguring the egalitarian forms of practice feminists aim ultimately to achieve more generally as indicating that it is possible to develop such forms (Dominelli 1992: 95).

Accordingly, feminist social workers are exhorted to be concerned with seeing the relevance of gender to social work as being a focus on women (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 1). The ethos of the relationship Hanmer and Statham propose is

‘To value women, to utilise their strengths and abilities as a resource...Women social workers need to spend time with women talking about issues and experiences that are important to women. This can be an enjoyable time from which social workers as well as clients can gain a feeling of exhilaration. It can be a time in which information is exchanged about ways social workers work, about support systems, about ways of dealing with men. Clients can be accepted as competent, as having strengths and rights’ (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 127).

Further, women social workers are urged to engage in women-centred practice, geared to what women want and need (Phillipson 1991). Such practice is seen as respecting and valuing women (Dominelli, 1997a: 28), affirming the specificity of women’s experiences (Hudson 1989: 73; Dominelli 1998: 918) and making women visible in their right (Hanmer and Statham 1989: 57). In other words, recognising the importance of the woman-to-woman process of feminist social work (Dominelli 1997a: 28) is a central concern.

Commonality

As the previous section indicated, the feminist social work literature places considerable emphasis on eclecticism, rooted in commonality of experience, as the basis for women social workers immersing themselves in feminist social work identity. Commonality is also seen as the basis on which relationships between women social workers and women service users can be built, with the objective of promoting egalitarian relationships (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 22; Marchant and Wearing 1988: 61). Phillipson argues that the mutuality of this woman-to-woman social work relationship should be valued as much as the completion of specific tasks (Phillipson 1991: 71). This emphasis continues to be evident in more recent writing on feminist social work, with the ways in which services are offered and the process of working together being seen as the hallmark of feminism and as more important than either the services themselves or the meeting of objectives (Dominelli 1997b: 246; Orme 1998: 223-224).

The analysis of many feminist social work texts roots egalitarian relationships between women social workers and women service users in their having common experiences of oppression. Early on in the development of the feminist social work literature, Wilson observed that women social workers are probably the only group who share a similar experience of oppression with many of their clients (Wilson 1975: 31) and Kravetz suggested that women social workers should recognise their unity with women clients (Kravetz 1976: 167). Some years later the Birmingham Women and Social Work Group noted that as women they had experiences in common which could be shared and explored

with women service users (Birmingham Women and Social Work Group 1985: 119) and Hanmer and Statham maintain a position they developed initially eleven years earlier in suggesting that

‘within the complex and changing forms of service delivery, women social workers and clients continue to share commonalties. They group around being female, their relationships with men, children, living within the family, employment and working conditions, and more general cultural expectations and pressures on women. These commonalties offer both a resource and a strength for practice. We suggest that it is only through a recognition of commonalties that a true assessment of the situation facing women clients and a user-centred practice can emerge’ (Hanmer and Statham 1999: 18).

Leaving aside the heterosexual bias in this statement, and some of the assumptions about homogeneity in heterosexual family forms, Hanmer and Statham’s argument is that the social service needs of women cannot be discussed until social workers become aware of the commonalties between their lives and those of women service users. They identify these commonalties as:

- The problematic impact on women of female life experience
- The public-private division of life through managing the double load of home and paid work
- Women’s relationships with men and their impact on women’s private and public worlds
- Being mothers and caring for dependants generally
- Women’s relationships with women.

- The influence more generally of society on women (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 10).

They argue that these commonalities exist

‘between women irrespective of age, life-stage, sexuality, class, race, reproductive history...In making the commonalities we share as women conscious, visible parts of our practice we learn that we need not, and indeed must not, be ashamed or surprised by them but incorporate them into our work’ (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 10-11).

In this vein, Dominelli and McLeod go further than most of the literature in moving beyond commonality of experience as the basis for feminist social work and on to stressing the importance of the common material interests between women social workers and women service users (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 147).

The emphasis placed on shared experience and common material interests in the literature leads to calls for feminist social workers to develop relationships with women service users which are built on equality, trust and sharing (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 142). Marchant and Wearing suggest that this can be accomplished through the creation of equal relationships which demystify the social work role (Marchant and Wearing 1986: 5) and Fook maintains that one way in which this sort of relationship can be achieved is by relocating the venue for interviews and conducting them in the park, over lunch, or whilst doing the supermarket shopping (Fook 1986: 56).

Postmodernist perspectives, whilst having an overriding emphasis on difference, produce remarkably similar prescriptions for the process of social work:

‘It is thus essential for practitioners...[to] construct through dialogue with the client, a shared understanding and reality which they agree is a representation of their interaction’;

‘The creative capacities of the social worker must be understood...as a co-creator of harmony, particularly with those who are marginalised and excluded...in social work encounters, solutions are not as much arrived at but found in the making, the telling and the talking’(Parton and Marshall 1998: 246/248).

Using such perspectives in relation to feminist social work, Featherstone and Fawcett call for collaborative methods of interpreting meaning and engaging in dialogue around the meanings attached to needs, rights and responsibilities, which form the basis of most social worker/service user relationships (Featherstone and Fawcett 1995b: 14).

Implications

What implications are identified in the feminist social work literature, from this stress on egalitarian relationships rooted in commonality, for women social workers working with women service users ?

The starting point is taken as women’s experiences. Social problems have to be re-defined from a feminist perspective by considering all problems in terms of their specific impact on women’s welfare. This requires an examination of

problems from the starting point of women's experiences of them (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 22), with the most fundamental precept being to believe the woman, to accept her and the problem she brings (Hanmer and Statham 1999: 141).

As far as assessment is concerned, this should be focused on re-defining the problem(s) from a feminist perspective:

‘...[feminist social work’s] immediate aim is to use helping relationships predicated on egalitarian values...a facilitating relationship encourages the woman to make her own decisions by playing an active role in assessing her situation, exploring alternatives, formulating plans of action and implementing them. The assessment process is likely to involve redefining the problem being considered from a feminist perspective. This removes it from the private realm of a personal problem for which the woman is solely responsible and lodges it in the public domain as a social problem which she is experiencing individually along with a number of other women’ (Dominelli 1997a: 246).

Finally, as we have already seen, the process of the social work relationship is as important as its goal(s):

‘Both the ends and means are imbued with egalitarian principles....For feminists, the process whereby needs are met is as important as the ends being sought...The exchange process must reflect the egalitarian relationships embodied in the service that is made available and requires the full involvement of both users and workers in the creation of that service. In other words, feminist social work is about creating non-

exploitative egalitarian relationships aimed at promoting individual well-being through collective means available to all at point of need' (Dominelli 1992: 87-88).

Problematic aspects

The literature's emphasis on feminist social workers and women service users engaging in egalitarian relationships is problematic in three respects.

First, the stress on commonality of experience suggests a tendency to regard women as a homogeneous group. As we saw in the previous section, homogeneity side-steps, and as a consequence obscures, the different experiences and standpoints among women and the significance of other social divisions in upholding the power of some groups of women at the expense of others (Hudson 1989: 72; Langan 1992).

Second, focusing so heavily on the presumption of an inherent mutuality in the relationships between women social workers and women service users runs the risk that women working with women defines what feminism means in social work. To work solely or predominantly with women in a statutory context could be seen as unwittingly reinforcing notions of women as the source of, and solution to, the problems presented to social workers (see, for example, Milner 1993). Cree and Cavanagh, for example, comment that although feminism has in their view rightly placed women at the centre of social work, it has also provided a rationale for opting out of work with male clients, with the implications that men's behaviour may have gone unchecked and that stereotypes about women's

caring role in the family and within the social welfare network may have been reinforced (Cree and Cavanagh 1996: 6).

A third consequence of the focus on commonality has been that differences of interest between women social workers and women service users, stemming from the nature of the power relationships which are inherent in the statutory context (see the section on the statutory context later in this chapter), are obscured or wished away. The problematic nature of this position can be illustrated through the use of a number of examples from the feminist social work literature.

In arguing for equality in women social worker/women service user encounters, the Birmingham Women and Social Work Group states that a feminist principle is that women social workers should not ask more of women service users than they ask of themselves (Birmingham Women and Social Work Group 1985: 121). This suggestion in itself demonstrates the nature of the power relationship: women social workers are in a position to make demands on ('to ask of') women service users, if they choose to do so⁴. Tucked into a statement by Dominelli and McLeod is another glimpse of what the reality of the woman social worker/woman service user relationship might be like:

'Complementing and indissolubly fused with feminism's egalitarian stance on welfare is its concern to engage in egalitarian practice related to its aims. We would argue that this has been the hallmark of feminist action in whatever sphere since the emergence of the contemporary

⁴ In this example, not only are the power relationships within which social workers operate rendered invisible, but also women social workers are presented as autonomous decision-makers, choosing how they want to work with women service users. (The shortcomings in this representation of statutory social work will be considered in a later section of this chapter and in the next chapter.)

women's movement. Again the idea at the heart of it is a simple one. If feminists aim to create egalitarian social relations then these must be reflected in their practice, otherwise it contradicts feminist aims and whatever social relations are being created they are not feminist ones' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 8-9).

This quotation indicates that the feminist social worker is introducing 'aims' into the encounter with the woman service user from the outset and is in a position to be able to do so, as Hale makes clear in this example:

'The file was read by the author...and Margaret was approached with the stance, maintained throughout contact with her, that she had been the victim of a restrictive upbringing related to her gender and that the early years of her adult life and represented a search for loving stable relationships and a secure home' (Hale 1984: 172).

In the following quotation, whilst Dominelli and McLeod point to the shift in the nature of the power relations feminist social workers should seek to achieve, it is premised upon a prior shift by the feminist social worker of the account of the problem, indicating some of the power she possesses in problem definition:

'The processes whereby problem definition itself occurs need to be carried out in an egalitarian way in order to foster the egalitarian relations which are being sought. This has brought a critical shift in the nature of the power relations surrounding such work, a shift away from both 'psychopathologising' the origins of 'individual' problems and accepting the appropriateness of placing [sic] the social origins of individual misery

and the right of the oppressed to speak for themselves' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 32).

Finally, the Birmingham Women and Social Work Group, whilst supporting commonality of oppression and experience, point to divergent material interests with the women service users with whom they work:

'The values and ideas that come from our feminism also suggest ways in which we can work from within existing state institutions for different forms of social relationships in order to provide a basis for new kinds of relationships with the recipients of our service... While we can use our feminism as a direct approach to women, it would clearly be naive to claim immediate and unconditional rapport with all women on the basis of our common experience of living in a male dominated world. We acknowledge as mainly white, middle-class, salaried women we are distanced from many of our clients' (Birmingham Women and Social Work Group 1985: 118, 120).

In contrast to these glimpses of problematic aspects of commonality, Wise provides a thorough-going consideration of feminist social work in which she maintains that the principles for practice identified by feminist writers are not sustainable, particularly as far as the pursuit of egalitarian relationships is concerned. She sees feminism and state social work as antithetical. She unravels the problematic nature of creating feminist social work practice in statutory settings and argues that the issue of power within social work, (which has been glimpsed through scrutinising some of the quotations given above), has tended to be overlooked. The gist of Wise's argument is that feminist

social work is a particular form of practice which came out of the political and social movements of 'second wave' feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. She suggests that feminist social work practice cannot be transplanted to a statutory framework which is essentially antithetical to its policies and goals, but should instead be encouraged to develop separately. As we saw in the previous section, Wise sees the development of the more liberal approach of anti-discriminatory social work as being a feasible alternative to feminist social work, with the aim of not creating, supporting or adding to (rather than trying to eliminate) discrimination and oppression. Thus, rather than continuing to use the term 'feminist social work' in statutory settings, she argues that it should only be retained for alternative services for women (Wise 1995: 113).

Summary and question for research

Women working with women is seen as at the heart of feminist social work. A shared experience of oppression between women social workers and women service users is seen as the impetus for creating egalitarian relationships. The feminist social work literature provides glimpses of some of the obstacles to achieving such relationships:

- What are women social workers' experiences of forming egalitarian relationships with women service users?

EMPOWERMENT

During the 1990s, 'empowerment' was a term which began to 'trip lightly off the tongue' in social work (Ward and Mullender 1991: 22). It is a term which has been imbued with a range of meanings:

'For some, such as Ward and Mullender (1991) and Langan and Lee (1989) for example, the idea of empowerment is inextricably linked with the wider struggle against an oppressive and "disempowering" professional practice; for others, such as the purchasers and providers of health and social care services, its use more commonly serves as a synonym for "enabling" users to have their say about the services they receive. Moreover, the idea of empowerment has found a place in a wide spectrum of political and ideological positions. On the one hand, for example, it plays a central role in the discourse of service user groups or "new social welfare movements" (Williams 1992), who are pressing for more control over the services they receive; on the other, it has a key place in the literature of the New Right theorists of the welfare market, concerned with freeing the individual from unnecessary interference by, or dependence upon, those services' (Lupton 1998: 107).

Given the availability of this range of meanings, how has empowerment been construed within the feminist social work literature?

Feminist social work and empowerment

Empowerment is not mentioned by the contributors to the literature on feminist social work in the 1970s and 1980s, with the exception of Comley who

refers to empowerment in addressing the imbalance of power between service users and social workers as being the first step towards transforming the experience of welfare (Comley 1989: 67). By the 1990s, however, feminist social work writing was referring to empowerment (See, for example, Ward and Mullender 1991; Langan and Day 1992; Dominelli 1992, 1997a and 1997b; Hudson et al 1994:100-101; Wise 1995; Cavanagh and Cree 1996; Lupton 1998; Orme 1998; Mullender 1998;). Dominelli's work provides a useful example of the approach adopted. She regards empowerment as the means of shaking off the shackles of social work:

‘Feminists have...extended the concept of empowerment. Whilst the practice of feminist ideals may be somewhat imperfect because feminists have like other members of society internalised its social divisions, and they have to operate from within its hierarchical structures, they are none the less formally committed to shedding these restraints and operating without them in their current work’ (Dominelli 1992: 98).

In particular, Dominelli argues that the feminist redefinition of a woman service user's problem(s), discussed in the previous section, is empowering for her because her experience is validated and her questioning of her position is one form of resistance leading to her gaining greater control over her life (Dominelli 1997a: 246; and see, Orme 1998: 221, 227). Elsewhere, Dominelli identifies social work as being concerned with the individual and collective empowerment of service users, as opposed to social work as a means of controlling women, with empowerment in client-social workers relationships serving as a strategy for change (Dominelli 1997b: 1, 223; and see, Mullender 1998).

Another example is provided by the collection of contributions contained in Women, Oppression and Social Work (Langan and Day 1992), which broadens out empowerment into a number of fields, for example, in relation to 'modes of intervention' (McNay 1992), in work with Black single mothers (Bryan 1992), in residential care (Aymer 1992) and with older women (Hughes and Mtezuka 1992).

Reservations about empowerment

For the most part, then, empowerment has been seen as a useful addition to the feminist social work vocabulary and to the strategy to be pursued through egalitarian relationships with women service users. Langan, however, questions the usefulness of empowerment and sees it as having come to refer to an individualistic conception of power which reduces social relationships to the interpersonal level and obscures wider power relations in society, leaving coping and survival as its limited objectives. As such she sees empowerment as typified by inviting service users to participate in decisions over which they have no control and as reconciling people to being powerless (Langan 1998: 214-215; and see, Humphries 1997). This individualistic conception is evident in definitions of empowerment in mainstream social work texts, even when these definitions are expressed forcefully:

'[Empowerment involves] enabling people who are disempowered to have more control over their own lives, to have a greater voice in institutions, service and situations which affect them, and to exercise

power over someone else rather than simply being the recipients of exercised power' (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995: 48).

Wise provides a substantial critique of what she refers to as 'the ethic of empowerment' in the feminist social work literature (Wise 1995). She observes that empowerment in feminist social work is derived from models of facilitated or autonomous forms of women's self-help, such as rape crisis centres and women's refuges, which are feminist alternatives to social work, having been deliberately constructed outside mainstream social work (Wise 1995: 110). This derivation of the model of empowerment in feminist social work is acknowledged by a number of writers (see, for example, Davis and Brook 1985: 5; Hudson 1985: 635-636; Hudson 1989: 71; Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 1; Dominelli 1992: 85, 99, 101; Dominelli 1997a: 245):

'Our starting point is that the most developed forms of feminist social work have taken place outside statutory social work...For statutory social work to become truly feminist it needs to embody such egalitarian initiatives within its practice (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 160).

As we saw in the previous section, and contrary to the dominant paradigm, Wise argues that this model cannot be transposed from contexts controlled by women into the (supposedly) egalitarian relationship between women social workers and women service users in statutory social work, in the belief that the woman service user will be empowered (Wise 1995: 106-107). She points out that these statutory-based relationships are artificially created and contain an imbalance of power, which is the missing dimension in feminist social work's analysis of statutory settings. Accordingly, she claims that feminist social work's

‘universalised concept of empowerment’ is not grounded in the realities of practice in the statutory context (Wise 1995: 111).

Summary and question for research

The term empowerment has become increasingly popular within social work and has been used in many different ways, one of which is represented by its presence in the feminist social work literature as the goal of egalitarian relationships between women social workers and women service users. The use of the term has been the subject of critique on the grounds that the term has become debased and that it is not grounded in the realities of practice.

- In what ways is the term ‘empowerment’ used by women social workers?

THE STATUTORY CONTEXT

In the previous sections, we have seen how the feminist social work literature has laid strong emphasis on women social workers embracing a feminist identity, as a basis for forging egalitarian relationships with women service users, with the goal of empowerment. The backcloth to the discussion of these three themes has been the statutory context, which has been acknowledged in passing at certain points in the discussion. In this section, the statutory context is brought into the foreground as the fourth and final theme in this consideration of the feminist social work literature.

The impact of feminist social work

Accounts of the impact of feminist social work in statutory settings reach varying conclusions. Some writers see the impact of feminist social work as being modest: it has had a 'marginal effect' (Hudson 1985: 635); 'had little impact' (Dominelli 1992: 83); and consists of a 'minority activity' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 125). Others are more optimistic: feminist social work placed gender 'on the social work map' and had a 'profound effect on social work practice' (Dominelli 1997a: 248-9); it has gained a 'strong foothold' (Dominelli 1997b: 42-43); it has made a 'significant contribution' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 10; and see, Dominelli 1997b: 104); and has 'an identifiable, extensive and widespread programme of action' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 114).

Faced with the changes wrought in social work over the 1990s (see next chapter), Dominelli's optimism concerning the impact that feminist social work will continue to have on future developments is grounded in the presence of practising feminist social workers within state welfare provision, the voluntary sector and commercial services (Dominelli 1992: 101). For Cavanagh and Cree, feminist practitioners remain one of the energising forces in a profession which is increasingly competence-driven and dominated by management and market ideologies (Cavanagh and Cree 1996: 182).

Feminist social work as a buffer

Within the varying degrees of optimism about the impact of feminist social work within statutory settings, there is agreement on the possibility of

women social workers occupying what Dale and Foster identify as a buffer position:

‘Welfare professionals do not invariably oppress female clients. Indeed, in a number of ways the existence of relatively powerful and autonomous welfare professions acts as an important beneficial buffer between women and the patriarchal/capitalist state’ (Dale and Foster 1986: 102).

Thus Hudson sees women social workers as possessing a degree of autonomy which could be used more profitably to develop more women-sensitive social work policies and practices (Hudson 1985: 654) and both Hallett and Comley see opportunities which can be grasped from within this position for re-negotiating the form and content of services to reflect the needs and capacities of women (Hallett 1989: x; Comley 1989: 45), with there being a considerable degree of autonomy which women social workers can exploit:

‘Social workers, to the extent that the state’s objectives are mediated through their practice, occupy an interesting structural position in relation to these dynamics [of struggle]....social workers can make effective use of this position...[they] need to rethink welfare and the dominant assumptions that mediate its forms and develop strategies that, in practice, can counteract their own involvement in the reproduction of oppressive social relations’ (Comley 1989: 63).

Constraints

Comley’s reference to involvement in the reproduction of oppressive social relations suggests the constraints which women social workers experience

within their buffer role in the statutory context (and see, Comley 1989: 57, 68; Birmingham Women and Social Work Group 1985: 118-120). They are, after all, 'firmly located in the state apparatus' (Dominelli 1997b: 70). Dominelli sees this state location as offering little room for professionals to assert their power as professionals (ibid. 72), with social workers being subservient to their paymasters (ibid. 84) and their ability to influence the definition of social work's remit being limited' (ibid. 115). She concludes that

'The provision of services has become subservient to managerial imperatives , whittling away much of the limited autonomy through which individual professionals have exercised a modicum of control over their own labour process' (Dominelli 1992: 93).

Hudson suggests the need to recognise the limits of what is possible (Hudson 1989: 79) and Brook and Davis note hostile reactions from state agencies to women social workers who are developing feminist social work (Brook and Davis 1985: xv):

'Social work's espoused primary aim is to promote people's welfare but the way in which this is carried out varies by agency and the legal constraints imposed upon it...Statutory work is directly funded by the central and local state and is empowered by law to protect people's personal welfare when that is endangered by themselves or others, and to provide them with the necessary [sic] for becoming "good citizens". Both these functions are defined in terms that are consistent with prevailing ideology.' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 10).

One aspect of the way in which the constraints imposed by prevailing ideology are identified as being experienced by women social workers is that the workers who are engaged in feminist practice are also engaged in other (inegalitarian) work which reinforces various forms of social control of women (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 125). What is struggling to emerge from these accounts is that at the core of the statutory context is the authority role (Wise 1985; 1995), played out by social workers in implementing and enforcing duties deriving from statutes, for example, the statutory responsibilities around the care and protection of children. Although Hanmer and Statham acknowledge that social workers can be placed in the position of working in opposition to women (Hanmer and Statham 1988: 54), conflicts stemming from the authority social workers hold are, for the most part, only hinted at or glimpsed fleetingly in the feminist social work literature, rather than being the subject of sustained discussion.

On the contrary, when feminist social work writers have encountered constraints in integrating their perspectives with social work in statutory settings, there is still an overriding optimism that this can be achieved: 'Whilst a feminist practice is beset with difficulty and controversy, the problems are not insurmountable and there is scope for feminist social work practice even within a statutory setting' (Hale 1984: 168-9). Similarly Hudson suggests that some of the constraints of working according to feminist principles inside large state-sponsored bureaucracies have been revealed but that much insight has been gained into the scope for changing social work practice, even within the limitations imposed by existing structures (Hudson 1989: 78-79). There is an

overriding belief that, whatever the circumstances, feminist social work, as depicted in the literature, can triumph:

‘The institutional parameters of social work provide the means by which the stability of social work practice can be maintained over time. These include organisational, legislative and professional constraints. Constraints do not have to operate in a conservative fashion by controlling “client” aspirations and demands. Feminist social work has provided an alternative paradigm which has demonstrated that institutions can promote rather than hinder “client” well-being’ (Dominelli 1997b: 137).

This points to constraints being surmounted through changes in the statutory organisation, which is seen as a target of feminist social work intervention.

The organisation

Transforming the organisational culture is seen as essential (Dominelli 1997b: 100). Hale argues that the organisational dimension is a core constituent in seeking to move beyond the pressure to individualise women’s experience:

‘Without a clear understanding of the patriarchal structure of society, of families and of the organisations in which they work, and an articulated stance and strategy towards these structures, feminist social workers find it very difficult to survive. If each encounter is perceived as an isolated incident rather than an integral part of a whole system of oppression and if the feminist social worker does not connect with others to examine

collectively their common ground, then feelings of frustration, disappointment and isolation are inevitable' (Hale 1984: 167-168).

Hudson concurs that optimism about the capacity to change employing organisations is one of the fundamental pre-requisites for feminist influenced social work practice (Hudson 1985: 654) and Orme maintains that

'feminist praxis...seeks to challenge and transform policy, practice and the organisation of the service delivery, which constrains people in gender-specific roles or oppresses them by the inappropriate exercise of power' (Orme 1998: 227).

Orme's proposal for feminist praxis also stresses challenging and transforming practice. This is the final area for consideration in this discussion of feminist social work and the statutory context.

Practice

Very few writers draw directly on examples of practice undertaken by qualified social workers⁵. Dominelli and McLeod (1989) point to the existence of practice from a feminist perspective with service users in statutory social work on a one-to-one and small group basis' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 114) and, in the main⁶, cite as evidence material produced by student social workers whilst on placement. (Evans 1985; Warren; 1985; Donnelly 1986; Falk 1986). However, it is questionable whether practice on student placements corresponds to that of qualified social workers in terms of both work pressure and the amount of interest in, and support for, work with women. Placements involve working with

⁵ The exceptions are Hale 1984 and Wise (1985, 1995).

⁶ They also refer to Hale's (1984) work.

small and protected caseloads under very close supervision (Wise 1985: 5). Thus there is little evidence around for what positive feminist practice, grounded in the realities of everyday practice, might be like (Wise 1995: 105, 111). Milner, for example, comments on the difficulties she faced when returning to fieldwork practice from an academic position. She found herself working with mothers, and ignoring fathers, notwithstanding a commitment to feminist practice, under pressure from a child protection system which scrutinised women (Milner 1993: 48-49).

Wise details some of the complexities of working with service users in a series of case studies, complexities which would not evaporate if subjected to the proposals of feminist social work, and concludes that she came to believe that feminist social work, defined in terms of working non-oppressively with women, is a fantasy based on a misunderstanding of the nature of local authority social work (Wise 1985: 2).

Summary

The consideration of the statutory context lay in the background in the three sections which discussed identity, egalitarian relationships and empowerment. In this section, it has been moved into the foreground. In the literature, feminist social work has been presented as a buffer between women service users and the state. This buffer position was discussed, along with some of its constraints, and the lack of attention to practice in statutory settings was noted. The discussion has raised initial questions concerning the possibilities of realising feminist social work, as depicted in the literature, in a statutory context.

That context will be subjected to further scrutiny in Chapter Two, before research questions are posed in relation to it.

CONCLUSION

The dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature suggests that women social workers can embrace a feminist identity and engage in egalitarian relationships with women service users which are directed towards empowerment. It is further suggested in the literature that such an approach can be adopted by women social workers in a statutory setting. The dominant paradigm has come under scrutiny in this Chapter.

First, the existence of diverse and splintered identities amongst women has questioned whether women social workers can align themselves with an all-embracing feminist identity as a stance from which to approach their work. The possibility of 'anti-discriminatory practice' encompassing 'the category of woman' and providing an alternative stance has suggested that the identities which women social workers embrace will not necessarily be formed within the bounds of feminist social work.

Second, attention has been drawn to obstacles to the formation of egalitarian relationships between women social workers and women service users.

Third, it was noted that the term empowerment has been the subject of critique on the grounds that the term has become debased and that it is not grounded in the realities of practice.

Finally, initial consideration of the statutory context raised questions about the possibilities of realising a feminist identity, expressed in egalitarian relationships with the goal of empowerment.

Discussion of these four themes within the feminist social work literature has suggested four research questions about the constraints and possibilities of developing feminist practice in a statutory setting, which we have noted as they have arisen, and which can now be brought together:

- Do women social workers primarily align themselves with a feminist social work identity?
- Do they see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory practice?
- What are women social workers' experiences of forming egalitarian relationships with women service users?
- In what ways is the term 'empowerment' used by women social workers?

(We will return to these research questions in Section B, as the starting point for considering women social workers' experiences.)

The cumulative impact of this chapter's scrutiny of the feminist social work literature has suggested that the dominant paradigm's proposals appear to face difficulties when placed within the statutory context. With the exception of Wise's work on the realities of practice (1985, 1995) and Langan's critique of empowerment (Langan 1992; 1998) the statutory context has been insufficiently explored in the literature. This crucial gap in the feminist social work literature's analysis makes it clear that the literature is an inadequate locus, in and of itself, for contextualising women social workers' experiences. In order to be able to

locate those experiences within a framework which can be used to theorise them more comprehensively, Chapter Two turns to a more detailed elaboration of the statutory context than that found in the feminist social work literature. That elaboration is seen as an essential dimension in contextualising the experiences of women social workers.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE SOCIAL WORK

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One indicated that the principal direction of the feminist social work literature has been to promote a feminist identity for women social workers, as the basis for establishing egalitarian relationships with women service users, with the goal of empowerment. As we saw, the advocacy of this ‘ethic of empowerment’ (Wise 1995) has encompassed statutory settings, albeit with some difference of views concerning the relationship between feminist approaches and other theories and methods (see, for example, Langan 1985; Hanmer and Statham 1988; Phillipson 1991; McNay 1992: 48-66).

The assumption underpinning the advocacy of egalitarian relationships and the ethic of empowerment is that women social workers are able to make choices about the nature of their work with women service users. As a result, the feminist social work literature focuses overwhelmingly on the principles according to which women social workers’ practice should proceed in order to achieve their goals and, for the most part, omits consideration of the characteristics of the statutory context. In Chapter One we saw that only occasional glimpses are provided of some of the constraining features which are exerted by that context on the pursuit of feminist social work goals. In other words, much of the feminist social work literature is suspended in a vacuum, isolated from an analysis of the features of the organisational regime of social work which are associated with its location in the state. As such, the proposals

in the literature for feminist social work may have much to contribute to a debate about what women's practice ought to be like, but this is only a partial framework if it is detached from an understanding of the nature of statutory social work as it is: 'the critical characteristics of social work practice...do not derive from the prescriptions of professional social workers' (Howe 1986: 2), nor, as we will seek to demonstrate, do they necessarily emanate from feminist social work.

For reasons which will become clear as the discussion unfolds, 'state social work' is seen as a term which depicts more accurately the field of social work normally referred to as the 'statutory sector': '...we regard all social work in Britain as coming under state control in some way and therefore being viewed appropriately as state social work' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 10). Whilst having some reservations about the use of the term 'state social work' in this all-embracing sense, (although it was perhaps prophetic with regard to the state's later colonisation of the voluntary sector), the significance of the state context in designating the nature of social work as far as the 'statutory sector' is concerned, is the central theme of this chapter. Accordingly, 'state social work' is the preferred term for what is usually referred to as 'statutory social work'. State social work, it will be argued, shapes the experiences and delimits the practice possibilities of women social workers.

The analysis of state social work is developed in stages. The first of the two sections which follow set out the defining features of social work, stressing its location within the state and the statutory duties undertaken by women social workers on behalf of the state. More specific developments in state social

work's organisational regimes are subsequently located within these general defining characteristics. The third section begins the consideration of these specific developments by dealing with the post-Seebohm organisational regime of 'bureau-professionalism', the era forming the backcloth against which the key ideas in the feminist social work literature were originally developed. The fourth section provides the specific context for the later consideration of women social workers' experiences in Section B of the thesis by identifying the significance of new managerialism for the organisational regimes in which they work. The fifth section considers the position of women social workers vis-à-vis management. The chapter concludes by bringing together the implications of the preceding analysis and sets out some questions for research.

SOCIAL WORK AS A STATE-MEDIATED PROFESSION

An overarching framework within which women social workers' experiences in state social work can be located and classified is provided by Johnson's analysis of professional work (Johnson 1972). Johnson views professions as occupational power structures which can be classified into three categories: collegiate, patronage and mediated. In the case of the latter, an agency, usually a state organisation, acts as mediator between the profession and its clientele in deciding the profession's client population and in broad terms what should be provided for the clientele through a legal framework and the overall allocation of resources. By this means, the state acts as the corporate patron of the professionals who provide services on its behalf, through the state's

agencies (Johnson 1972: 77). The state delegates power to, and in the process legitimises the status of, the professionals concerned (Hill 1997: 209):

‘[these professions] do not resist the extension of state power for they have no choice but to be public employees. On the contrary they generally welcome the extension of state power, for it is the only source of such power as they themselves possess; indeed, these occupational groups owe their very existence to the power of the state’ (Cousins 1987: 97).

Johnson’s classification thus allows social work to be considered as a state-mediated power structure within and through which women social workers operate: ‘Occupational control is not negotiated within social work, or between social work and its clientele, but mediated by the state’ (Hugman 1991a: 201). Although Johnson’s typology is helpful in identifying where state social work is located, and how it can be classified, it does not extend to a consideration of how state-mediation shapes the nature of professionals’ work. This concern is, however, addressed by Derber (1982; 1983).

Derber’s historical approach highlights the extent to which professionals have become engaged in salaried, rather than independent, employment. He is concerned with the distinctiveness of professional work and, in particular, the manner and extent to which professionals have control over their work in situations of, what he terms, ‘dependent employment’, for example dependent state employment (Derber 1983: 309). In order to demonstrate the distinctiveness of professional work, Derber elaborates the way in which such work is controlled. He argues that the potential for control over professional work has, in principle, two components: control over the means of work, that is over the

organisation and execution of work, and control over the ends of work, that is over the final product, the goals or purposes of work. He contends that although professionals lack control over the ends to which their work is put, they nevertheless retain considerable autonomy over the means of undertaking their work. Autonomy over the means of undertaking their work leads Derber to suggest that a 'domain of freedom and creativity' exists around 'problems of technique' (Derber 1983: 316) in how the professional's job is carried out.

In the case of social work, its ends are established by the state. It is, in Derber's terms, 'ideologically subordinated', but the means by which the state's ends are achieved through social work are in the hands of social workers (and see, Hugman 1991a: 202):

'Keeping social workers' focus on individual pathology and away from social oppression was of major importance to state agencies...and formed the basis for a highly sophisticated ideological co-option, where social workers' moral concerns for the well-being of their clients could be accommodated in a form of practice which served institutional ends' (Derber 1983: 333).

Derber's distinction between the ends and means of professional work suggests that women social workers, as state-mediated professionals, may retain considerable degrees of what he terms 'technical autonomy', that is control over the means of carrying out their work (Derber 1983: 335). Mashaw makes a similar distinction for some areas of the state (such as social work), proposing what he designates as the 'professional treatment model', which requires the use of specialist skills and intuitive judgements. He argues that in mediating

between the state and the service user, professionals, such as women social workers, are granted discretion to interpret how tasks are performed within general frameworks (Mashaw 1983: Ch. 2), a position supported by Hill:

‘The organisational or planning activities at the top of hierarchies set contexts for, but do not necessarily predetermine decision-making at field levels, where very different tasks are performed and very different problems have to be solved’ (Hill 1997: 187-188).

The classic (U.S.) study which illustrates the discretion which state-mediated professionals have in deciding upon the means by which they undertake their work is Lipsky’s Street-level Bureaucracy (1980):

‘On the one hand, service is delivered by people to people, invoking a model of human interaction, caring and responsibility. On the other hand, service is delivered through a bureaucracy, invoking a model of detachment and equal treatment under conditions of resource limitations and constraints, making care and responsibility conditional’ (Lipsky 1980: 71).

Lipsky suggests that in these circumstances street-level bureaucrats have discretion because the nature of the services they provide requires human judgement that cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute (Lipsky 1980: 161). In similar vein Challis argues that Social Services Departments’ implementation of central government legislation requires social workers to have a degree of discretion and autonomy if they are to deal with the idiosyncrasies of people’s lives (Challis 1990: 6). Furthermore, Hudson suggests that it is in the interests of such agencies not to fetter the discretion of street-

level bureaucrats because they are engaged in carrying out much of the difficult rationing of services in situations where demand exceeds supply. It is the exercise of the discretion they possess in carrying out this function which is the source of their power over service users (Hudson 1989).

These three concerns - with the difficulty of programming human judgement, the consequent need for the exercise of discretion and the power inherent in its exercise - affect the achievement and retention of state-mediated professional status. The amount of professional discretion (or, in Derber's terms, 'technical autonomy') enjoyed by women social workers with regard to the means of operating within the professional treatment model is influenced by how three factors impact upon social work in general: 'expertise' - a body of knowledge which can be learned and transmitted; 'indeterminacy' - work within areas of uncertainty which are portrayed as only susceptible to specialist, esoteric and non-transferable professional skills; 'invisibility' - working situations in which detailed surveillance of work is difficult (Hill 1997; 209-210).

Whilst women social workers' claims to the exercise of discretion on the grounds of expertise might be contentious and contested, indeterminacy has been a significant dimension in social work's general claim for a significant degree of discretion in its operations:

'Professional insulation from external controls is likely to be greatest where the outcomes of professional activities are relatively vague and intangible...This may be a factor in professional attachment to casework' (Sibeon 1991: 27).

Within their casework social workers have been found to exploit indeterminacy in their own preferred methods of work (Pithouse 1987: 49) and it is the autonomy to do so which has been the basis on which the job is routinely undertaken (Pithouse 1991: 45-46), as an 'invisible trade' (Pithouse 1987).

Women social workers can, then, be regarded as state-mediated professionals, who experience a degree of 'technical autonomy' over the means by which they carry out the ends of the state within a professional treatment model. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter One, the feminist social work literature lays claim to the exercise of discretion by women social workers in their work with women service users in stronger terms than the general claims of social work referred to above, namely, on the basis of (feminist social work) expertise and (egalitarian relationship) indeterminacy in the context of (away from the office) invisibility.

In the next section the implications of this conceptualisation of social work as a state-mediated profession are considered further in relation to the statutory duties undertaken by social work on behalf of the state.

SOCIAL WORK'S STATUTORY DUTIES

The legal underpinning of social work, through its mandate of statutory duties, is the tangible manifestation of the 'ends' of social work referred to in the previous section. Statutory duties define the responsibilities to be exercised by women social workers in pursuit of the state's ends. Anleu argues that this legal underpinning affects the environment in which social work is practised (Anleu 1992: 41). Howe goes beyond seeing the statutory mandate as a contextual

consideration which affects social work and, instead, regards it as determining the nature of social work much more directly (Howe 1986: 160). Aldridge regards the state as unequivocally shaping social work and setting its agenda in tasks which are determined by the government of the day (Aldridge 1996: 182-3). Social work is, therefore, in a subordinate position both in terms of how it is defined and how it is organised:

‘...social work is “overdetermined” by the economic and social formation so that its status is best seen as relatively subordinate rather than as relatively autonomous. Put at its most uncompromisingly straightforward, state welfare is an element within the state apparatus, and as such will be to some extent articulated with it at both ideological and material levels...What passes for social work is the product of the varying capacity of certain institutions and agencies to give it particular definition, to shape what it is that constitutes legitimate professional knowledge and the manner in which the delivery of services should be organised. In both respects, this means that the nature of social work is an accomplishment, a construction...’ (Webb 1996:173).

It follows that what is considered to be ‘social work’ is not fixed but will undergo construction and reconstruction as a result of ideological shifts by successive governments, which are reflected in legislative changes (Sheppard 1995: 273). As Jones points out, the tempo may have increased in recent years but from the late 1940s onwards, state social work has not had any sustained period free from significant legislative change (Jones 1999: 38).

As a consequence of the state's central involvement in drawing up the parameters of social work through legislation, women social workers are presented with statutory duties: definitions of certain categories of people who, it has been decided, will be the focus of their work. Thus the core functions of social work are established in the law, as the manifestation of state policy. The law sets out the rights, duties and responsibilities of Social Services Departments, on the one hand, and of service users, on the other, in those socially problematic areas which have been accorded official recognition by the state. The law not only defines the ends of social work, but also constitutes the source of women social workers' authority for the means by which they intervene in service users' lives in the pursuit of statutory duties. Social work's existence within the state is, therefore, central to the establishment of social workers' right to intervene in aspects of people's lives which are defined as socially problematic (Sheppard 1995: 35). Social work thus becomes statutory in the act, or more accurately Acts, of the state producing legislation (and accompanying guidelines and procedures), which are directed at certain categories of people, such as the child in need of protection or the older person who needs residential care. Women social workers implement that legislation, in the form of statutory duties, on behalf of the state.

If the delegation of authority to social work, as a mediated profession, is a state strategy dealing with certain social problems in specific and individualised ways, it carries the implication that those social problems to which social work's attention is directed are in the process depoliticised. Parton (1994) sees this as a contradictory process, namely that the political role of social work is in its being

seen as apolitical, as being, what he terms elsewhere, 'social-work' (Parton 1996a; 1996b). Social problems become personal problems with individual solutions, to be left in the hands of experts (Wilding 1982: 63), working in the personal social services:

'Social workers' concern is not with social problems per se so much as those individuals who are socially defined as socially problematic in areas of concern to the occupation. In this sense, theirs is a case-based approach. The delegation of work in these areas of concern reflects the individualising influence of the definitions of the problems themselves...When these problems are delegated to social workers, the institutionalised definition of the problems and the appropriate responses constrain the activities of social workers' (Sheppard 1995: 40).

As Howe succinctly puts it, social workers are concerned with 'cases not causes' (Howe 1980: 319). Recognition of this depoliticising effect of the state's delegation of social problems to social work, leads Davies to argue that social work can only survive if social workers accept this as the reality of their position and adopt a consensus model, working within existing social relations (Davies 1986).

As a state-mediated profession, social work has, then, been rooted in an overall state policy framework for managing certain areas of social life through the personal social services. The framework is consensus-oriented and individualistic in its determination of the ends of state intervention in social problems. However, we should avoid the temptation to present women social workers' intervention in women service users' lives as a straightforward cause

and effect process in which women service users fit into a particular socially problematic category, identified by the state in legislation, and then automatically become service users and the subject of women social workers' attentions. As we saw earlier the means of achieving the state's ends are delegated to women social workers, as the state's experts in defining who constitutes an individual example of a particular socially problematic category. In the late 1970s and the 1980s, a number of studies demonstrated the significance of social workers' mediating function in the making of key decisions about who became a service user (see, for example, Parsloe and Stevenson 1978; Smith 1980; Buckle 1981; Satyamurti 1981; Kemshall 1986; Pithouse 1987). However, whilst reflecting the pivotal position of social workers as state mediators, these studies did not unpack in any detail the process involved in turning people into service users.

The production of service users through the implementation of statutory duties involves the 'creation of subjects' (Philp 1979). Leonard argues that traditionally in social work the key to the creation of subjects has been the rhetoric of universalism which has been present in British state policy and which carries within it an assumption of homogeneity (Leonard 1997a: 21). Thus, state social work, although targeted at individuals, carefully categorised general needs:

'Under the influence of British social administration, social services...were based upon the careful categorisation of client..."needs", supposedly reflecting the generally common needs of integrated coherent subjects rather than the diverse, conflicting and culturally varied needs of different individuals and populations' (Leonard 1996: 22).

This is the context within which the social worker is involved with the individual subject in the person of the service user and within which the subject position of the service user is constructed (Leonard 1997b). Furthermore, Leonard argues that although service users may provide a narrative to social workers, and it may be listened to, it is not received as a form of knowledge on a par with the professional knowledge of the expert, which is brought to bear on a service users' individual circumstances. In other words, the service user's narrative is subject to interpretation by professional standards which are used to make judgements and which bring the service user's narrative into conformity with the state's legal and organisational categories through processes of subjectification and subordination, culminating in the case file (Leonard 1997a: 94-96):

'The clients wait in line and are acted upon "in their own interests" by the bureaucracy which organises them, their multifarious wants reduced to the manageable entity of a set of defined items requiring attention. To describe the file and its meaning in terms of control and subordination is not to suggest that social service agencies are typically Kafkaesque in their heartless anonymity, though some may be' (Leonard 1997a: 94)¹.

¹ This bleak depiction of the functioning of social work cautions against glib use of the term 'empowerment': 'Subjects are constructed...in discourses, including discourses of organisation, in a way that enables a subject's actions to become meaningful, a mode of objectification that provides the ground where power/resistance takes a beneficial turn and can lead to empowerment of the subject. Empowerment is not easily gained, of course, because resistance to the power of dominant discourse is everywhere opposed, and we can assume that organisation will attempt to suppress and eliminate resistance through the various techniques of subjectification (diagnosis, classification, exclusive professional language, surveillance, medication, therapy) which the organisation has available' (Leonard 1997a: 92). An example of such processes in relation to community care settings is provided by Means and Smith, who refer to 'assessment, diagnosis, screening, codification and categorisation, all of which serve to help define the client, and the nature of his or her problems, in technical, legislative and bureaucratic terms' (Means and Smith 1998: 74).

These transformation processes should not be regarded as a mechanical function. The previous section emphasised that there is room for some variation in forms of practice or, put another way, the means by which these processes are undertaken. However, these processes cannot occur without the existence, or outside, of the state's prescribed roles for women social workers in identifying individual examples of socially problematic categories, roles which embody the state's ends, expressed in the statutory duties undertaken. (This becomes clear if we contrast Leonard's quotation above, with the position of independent counsellors who can work, by and large, solely at the level of their clients' individual subjectivity). Women social workers, in their mediation of the subjectivity of women service users and the state's socially problematic categories, are state agents:

‘We can...recognise the usefulness of seeing state disciplinary power over...its subjects as a gaze, an inspecting, regulating gaze. The history of the welfare state in Western societies might be seen as the refining of this gaze, its technological development, its proliferation through specialisation and professional expertise, its justification as necessary for the subject's well-being...“the gaze” is both a literal description of social practices and a metaphor for the monitoring and surveillance of subjects undertaken by the state apparatus’ (Leonard 1997a: 43).

The next section begins to examine the organisational regimes of the British welfare state apparatus, and more specifically the regimes of Social Services Departments, as particular manifestations of ‘the gaze’ of state social work within which women social workers’ experiences are embedded..

SOCIAL WORK'S BUREAU-PROFESSIONAL REGIME

Statutory duties sanction women social workers' intervention in those socially problematic areas of women service users' lives which are identified by the state as warranting intervention. Women social workers do not, however, function as atomised individual practitioners directly connected to the legislation they implement. The statutory mandate of state social work is implemented through organisations. The inextricable intertwining of policy, organisation and practice is clearly emphasised in Payne's comment that social work practice can only be understood in the context of policy and organisation, and policy and organisation can only be understood as they are expressed through practice (Payne 1995: xiii).

Specifically, women social workers are representatives of Social Services Departments. These departments are the sites through which central government legislation is mediated through policy and implemented through organisation (Cooper 1991), before being turned by women social workers into concrete practices:

'Social work is welded into the regulation and managerialism of the state. Social workers emerged from a close relationship with state authority...into a typically professional position from which they mediate state power and regulation in indirect ways....The internal organisation of the social work profession...ensures some minimum of conformity of social workers to the requirements of the state. The bureaucratic and

managerial character of social services departments operates to reinforce professional standards' (Langan 1985: 43).

Although, women social workers' power and authority is ultimately derived from, and exists to implement, a framework of statutory duties which defines their tasks and functions (Sheppard 1995: 53), these duties are discharged from their employment position in Social Services Departments (Hugman 1991b: 62). The Social Services Department bureaucracy is not just a social work agency, it is the agency of social work, the locus within which the state's legislative mandate is manifested and achieved in social work roles and tasks (Howe 1979; 1986; Davies 1986).

The general appeal historically of bureaucracies, such as Social Services Departments, can be readily understood in terms of their being seen as an advance on earlier organisational regimes, in being structures based upon equality before the law and upon notions of order, reason and justice (Leonard 1997a: 89). The specific appeal of state social work, which led eventually to the establishment of Social Services Departments, can be traced back to the foundation of the post-war welfare state. It is an appeal in which 'organisation and professionalism are inescapably linked' (Hugman 1991a: 200)

In the aftermath of the Second World War there was some debate about whether social work had a role to play in the newly-established social democratic welfare state (Seed 1973: 49-52). The resolution of this debate lay in state social work being seen as humanising and fine-tuning citizens' contact with the welfare state:

‘The social worker who does for the run of ordinary people what confidential secretaries and assistants do for the favoured few is putting a genuine professional skill at the disposal of those who may properly be called her clients and she is as essential to the functioning of a welfare state as is lubrication to the running of an engine. Without her the machinery would seize up’ (Wootton 1959: 298-299).

This representation of social work, as the individualising and personalising arm of the welfare state, masked social work’s state-derived power and authority, discussed in the previous sections. However, the notion of the woman social worker as a state-provided confidential secretary resonated with the dominant social democratic ideology. From within that ideology, Marshall’s view was that state welfare provision was not for the ‘helpless and hopeless’ of the population but was for all citizens. He identified an emergent consensus with respect to the services that should be provided and on the overall responsibility for the welfare of the citizen remaining with the state (Marshall 1965: 97).

From within this consensus, Marshall (1981: 141-142) viewed service users as submissive clients of the state (Roche 1987: 369), whose engagement with services is predicated on the passive consumption of state provision provided by professionals (Keane 1988: 4). The organisational regime which was constructed on the assumption of client passivity and which accorded priority to professional expertise in the delivery of social services (Marshall 1975: 205-206) was that of ‘bureau-professionalism’.

Bureau-professional regimes combine two dimensions of the organisation of state welfare; the rational administration of bureaucratic systems

and professional expertise and discretion in control over the content of services (Clarke and Langan 1993: 67). Bureau-professionalism was thus based on Fabian assumptions about the correct combination of professional expertise and the regulatory principles of rational administration as the route to social welfare (Newman and Clarke 1994: 22). Clarke and Newman regard this combination as containing two modes of co-ordination: 'bureaucratic co-ordination' - efficient and impartial administration delivering routinised outputs. (Professional judgements might be complex but they could follow routinised processes with stable and predictable outcomes); 'professional co-ordination' - expertise which was more than administrative competence and which drew on distinctive bodies of knowledge and skills about the causes of, and solutions to, social problems (Clarke and Newman 1997: 5-6).

These professional and bureaucratic modes of co-ordination are, however, 'always constrained by the political will of representative democracy' (Leonard 1997a: 101), through which different social interests are mediated:

'Between the late 1940s and the mid-1970s, it is possible to see the welfare state as being sustained by a triple social neutrality: first, the bi-partisan political settlement...; second, bureaucratic administration which promised social impartiality; and third, professionalism which promised the application of valued knowledge in the service of the public...These three principles - of political representation, bureaucratic administration and professionalism - combined in different ways and with different balances of power in specific institutional arrangements' (Clarke and Newman 1997: 8).

Bureau-professional regimes thus combine bureaucratic, professional and political modes of power linking policy-making [politics], policy implementation [bureaucracy] and practice [professionalism] (Newman and Clarke 1994: 23). Clarke and Newman identify three particular power formations in traditional bureau-professional regimes: 'decision making power' - the application of bureaucratic rules to particular cases and the exercise of professional discretion involving the application of specialised knowledge to complex cases or processes; 'agenda setting power' - the capacity to define what decisions need to be made, centred on connecting formalised categories of need to the assessment of individual cases. (i.e. the identification and assessment of need and the application of expertise to meeting legitimated needs); 'normative power' - the bureau-professional discourse of needs and rights through which access to services must be negotiated as the legitimating discourse for bureau-professional expertise and discretion (Clarke and Newman 1997: 63).

Bureau-professionalism is, then, a specific configuration of structures, cultures, relationships and processes of organisational co-ordination whose detailed manifestations vary according to specific contexts (Newman and Clarke 1994: 22-23). In the case of state social work, a key moment was the implementation of the Seebohm Report in local authorities. As a consequence of the implementation of the Report, social work became a central element of the welfare state (Clarke 1979: 127). Social work's position, as a state-mediated occupation, was thus consolidated through the establishment of a bureau-professional organisational regime. In the implementation of the Seebohm

Report, both bureaucratic managerial structures and professionalism were combined:

‘In 1970 the new Social Services Departments came into being...involving...a blending of elements of professionalism and bureaucratic organisation. Neither autonomous professionalism nor purely bureaucratic hierarchies emerged from the reorganisation...This mode of organisation...is a hybrid, which we shall refer to as bureau-professionalism...It involved a negotiated partnership between social work, attempting to organise as a profession on the one hand, and the managerial and organisational approach of the state and local authorities on the other’ (Parry and Parry 1979: 42-43).

Within this bureau-professional organisational regime, a bureaucratic management hierarchy was compatible with discretion (or, in Derber’s terms, ‘technical autonomy’ over the means of carrying out work) for social workers (Webb and Wistow 1987: 107-108). This regime provided women social workers with the organisational base for the power they exercised in their work with women service users and their organisational position within bureau-professionalism gave them their day-to-day authority.

What these developments suggest is that bureau-professional regimes were imbued from the outset with a strong streak of authoritarianism (Roche 1992: 37), with little concern for professionals’ accountability to service users (Johnson 1972; Wilding 1982; Hugman 1991b). This authority dimension was disguised by the dominant social democratic ideology, but was nevertheless present:

‘Bureau-professional relationships were characterised by the power of such staff to categorise, define and treat service users. That is, they were able to deploy decision making, agenda setting and normative power within the scope of individual client/worker interactions...In bureau-professional interactions, the power of service users was based on limited entitlements to certain universal services...They had little power to influence the ways in which services were delivered or the processes through which bureau-professional power was enacted’ (Clarke and Newman 1997: 63-64).

Critiques of this authoritarian aspect of bureau-professionalism, as a linchpin of the post-war welfare state, became crucial to how women social workers fared with the emergence of new managerialism.

SOCIAL WORK AND NEW MANAGERIALISM

In the preceding sections it has been argued that state social work was characterised by three features in the post-war welfare state, and more especially in the post-Seebohm era: it was a state-mediated occupation, it was charged with the exercise of statutory duties and it was located within a bureau-professional regime. At the present time, social work remains a state-mediated occupation charged with the exercise of statutory duties but its organisational regime has changed fundamentally. This fundamental shift has been achieved by managerialism, ‘the term used to refer to the inroads made by management into professional autonomy and power’ (Clarke 1994: 6-7). Social work was ripe for incursion by managerialism as a result of being identified as one example of

social democracy's legacy in the organisational, professional and political power of bureau-professional regimes, a legacy identified by the Right as an obstacle to its reform of the welfare state in the 1980s (Clarke et al 1994: 3; Clarke and Newman 1993: 48-49; Newman and Clarke 1994: 23).

Since the 1980s, an emphasis on managerialism as a transformational force has occupied an increasingly significant role in the organisation of state welfare regimes (Pollitt 1990; Clarke et al 1994). Managerialisation has been a strategy for the recomposition and diminution of the previous modes of power (see above) within the welfare state in order to establish the conditions for enhanced managerial discretion (Newman and Clarke 1994: 25). In recasting social democratic structures and cultures through managerialism (Clarke et al 1994: 4), management models from the private sector were seen as the key to reconstituting the public sector and harmonising public and private regimes through the mantra of the three 'E's (Local Government Training Board 1985; Audit Commission 1988; Pollitt 1990: 27; Hoggett 1991):

'The managerialism current in public service organisations...has sought to install effectiveness, efficiency and economy as the overriding principles of sound management...By redefining clients as consumers and emphasising the virtues of "choice" and "diversity", it has attempted to infuse welfare practice with something resembling market discipline. Aided by the work of the Audit Commission it has defined or rather redefined accountability in largely financial terms. The result is supposedly the leaner and meaner organisation geared to flexible response on a fast-changing welfare terrain...Welfare must be seen to be done

rather than said to be done. Recognisable results and the primacy of the product over process are what matters in managerialised organisations' (Froggett and Sapey 1996: 9).

After the 1987 general election, state social work began to experience managerialism to a greater extent than previously with the implementation of legislation which aimed to curb expenditure, divide up public provision, increase the scope of the private sector, strengthen business management principles and reduce the influence of professionals (Jones 1994: 190, 205). This was depicted as a 'revolutionary' process by the Audit Commission (Audit Commission 1988: 1) which required social work to be more managerial in a changing legislative context, shaped by the Children Act (1989) and the National Health Service and Community Care Act (1990).

Although these twin pillars of social work's legislative mandate originated in different policy-making processes and displayed differences in policy goals (Hallett 1991), government guidance sought to emphasise similarities in their approach (Department of Health 1989: para. 1.3; 1990: para. 1.18). Langan's conclusion is that

'...although Social Services Departments and social workers survived, and were in a sense legitimated by the welfare legislation of the late eighties, they emerged in the 1990s with new roles and with circumscribed powers and prestige. The framework for both community care and child protection increased central government control and extended multi-agency collaboration on terms which inevitably reduced the authority of Social Services Departments and the autonomy of social

workers. The intrusion of surrogate or “quasi”-markets and the new managerialism on the one hand , and the law and the courts on the other, impose limitations on social workers’ professional aspirations’ (Langan 1993: 149-150).

Elsewhere Langan points to implications for women in the legislation through the ideological focus on traditional family values in the Children Act (1989) and the promotion of extended kinship networks in the NHS and Community Care Act (1990) (Langan 1992b: 84).

As part of this process of legislative reform, Preston-Shoot detects a shift from the law being seen as representing the ends of the state (see previous section) - ends to which the means of social work practice were directed - and towards the law becoming the definition of practice itself, thus implying a diminution in women social workers’ role in mediating the implementation of the law. ‘Legalism’ is considered to be replacing practice based on other conceptions of social work and marginalising social work’s mediating role in presenting service users’ experiences to organisations (Preston-Shoot 1996: 49; and see, Braye and Preston-Shoot 1998: 60-61). The trend towards legalism is regarded as being transmitted into practice via agency policies and priorities and, in the process, social work’s knowledge base, values and core activities are thought to have been lost (Preston-Shoot 1996: 52), with government guidance and local management prescribing in detail the legally-based criteria for decisions and leaving little scope for individual judgement and skill (Jones and Jordan 1996: 257).

The increasing influence of managerialism during the 1990s in defining agency policies and priorities in social work, as elsewhere in the public sector, has resulted in the development of three interlocking strategies of control: decentralising operational units concurrent with achieving a greater degree of centralised control over strategy and policy; establishing the principle of managed competition; and developing processes of performance management and monitoring (audits, inspections, quality assessments, reviews), largely directed towards operationally decentralised units (Hoggett 1996). In relation to social work, the implementation of the N.H.S. and Community Care Act (1990) has involved the development of all three control strategies simultaneously. The implementation of the Children Act 1989 has witnessed a minimal amount of managed competition but the other two control strategies have been used extensively and intensively (Packman and Jordan 1991; Otway 1996; Parton 1996b).

Hoggett (1996), and others, identify a number of effects which stem from these three managerial control strategies including, first, that decentralised units have become more like small businesses, making it difficult to transcend the particularism of the experience of working in a specific unit.

Second, central government's hold has been strengthened. Managerialism has been accompanied and promoted by detailed policy and practice guidance, encapsulated in procedures as an alternative to professional discretion (Froggett and Sapey 1996: 11) There has been

‘a massive growth in detailed sets of guidance, procedures and checklists.

In addition to government guidance, each agency is developing its own

codes of practice and procedures...this proceduralization can be viewed as a way of circumscribing professional autonomy and discretion' (Banks 1998: 214).

As a result, practitioners are more likely to be concerned with the measurable outcomes of depoliticised practice as they follow departmental and government rules, guidance and procedural manuals (Everitt 1998: 109).

Third, whilst control over resources has been delegated increasingly to operational managers, centralised control has been retained and strengthened over key strategic questions such as the allocation of resources to operational units, within a framework of financial rules and performance targets (Hoggett 1991). Social workers have had to learn cost-consciousness:

'In a short space of time the British personal social services were transformed from agencies with...considerable professional autonomy and discretion, into systems that deploy expert knowledge to manage risks and needs in ways that are highly responsive to price signals' (Jones and Jordan 1996: 257).

Fourth, distributive questions were depoliticised as the overall volume of demand which was allowed to be met was fixed by cash limits allocated to cost centres. In times of budgetary constraint, operational decentralisation combined with tightly centralised expenditure control restrains costs, as budget-holders strive to stay within budget (Payne 1995: 79). This is often referred to, somewhat cosmetically, as concentrating on 'core business' which is depicted by Clarke as shedding activities that do not contribute to the organisation's primary goals, with the interplay between external or statutory requirements and internal

organisational politics constructing specific definitions of core business in particular organisations (Clarke and Newman 1997: 78). In the process, difficult rationing decisions, stemming from how 'core business' is defined, are passed down the line to women social workers.

Fifth, surveillance has increased. Traditional supervision has been increasingly replaced by invisible surveillance by computer and this has been accompanied by greater formalisation through form-filling, report writing and procedure following (Newman and Clarke 1994: 20; Leonard 1997a: 91). Invisible surveillance is complemented by visible surveillance through audit and evaluation of explicit and measurable organisational objectives (Clarke and Newman 1997: 118) by bodies such as the Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission (Kelly 1991; Jones and Novak 1993). This has led to impression management and performing to target (Clarke and Newman 1997: 80-81).

The overall implications of these changes do not augur well for feminist social work. New managerialism is concerned with economy, efficiency and effectiveness, narrowly defined, with value for money in the production of services. It is concerned with individual results measured by outputs which are technically measured and managerially controlled, not with valuing the social/collective outcomes of social work. The assumption is that all service users and situations can be individually classified from within a manageable number of categories. Williams sees this as a 'managerialist notion of diversity' which

'lies firmly rooted in professional or managerially defined categories - old, sick, at risk, disabled, people who are dangerous to themselves and

others, vulnerable and so on. Even the category “ethnic minorities” is now seen as a managed client group (Williams 1996: 74).

For each category, service criteria can be developed which will deliver specific outputs. The cost of services can be specified and the efficiency of services measured. Contrary to the feminist social work literature’s stance, managerialism is not concerned with complexity of women service users’ lives or the complexity of factors which may be causing their problems. In order to make problems manageable, the technical efficiency of women social workers is the yardstick. It is tempting to represent these sweeping changes as the triumph of managerialism, achieved by the ousting of bureau-professionalism. However, Clarke and Newman (Clarke and Newman 1997: 76; and see Newman and Clarke 1994: 25) suggest that new managerialism has re-adjusted, rather than displaced, bureau-professionalism. They identify two main ways in which the relationship between bureau-professionalism and new managerialism has been shaped.

The first is through the subordination of bureau-professionalism to new managerialism, requiring professionals to take into account the reality and responsibility of budgetary management so that professional assessments of need take place alongside calculations of the resourcing of intervention. Subordination is a way of containing

‘the “irresponsible” exercise of professional judgement about needs by making it coterminous with the allocation of resources. Where “need” was once the product of the intersection of bureaucratic categorisation and professional judgement, it is now increasingly articulated with and

disciplined by a managerial calculus of resources and priorities' (Clarke and Newman 1997: 76, emphasis original).

The second way in which Clarke and Newman consider the relationship between managerialism and bureau-professionalism is re-shaped is through co-option, as managerialism colonises professional concerns and language, bringing them into line with those of management. One example of co-option is the increasing managerial emphasis on the quality of services rather than simply a calculative view of their efficiency. This growing managerial attention to service matters builds professionals' attachment to corporate cultures and directions (Clarke and Newman 1997: 76). Both subordination and co-option require practitioners and managers to demonstrate conformity to organisational policies and procedures (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1998: 58), with a low tolerance level for deviation from conformity in corporate cultures which stand for homogeneity and predictability (Itzin and Newman 1995: 107).

Empirical research into the impact of the changes which have been discussed reveals a mixed response from social workers. In a study conducted by La Valle and Lyons social workers felt that the more satisfying aspects of the job were being neglected. These neglected aspects were identified as direct work with service users including support and counselling. They also saw the imposition of standards and procedures as an attack on professional autonomy and discretion. However, they approved of the consolidation and formalisation of principles for practice as clarifying the role of the social worker and addressing the power imbalance between professionals and service users (La Valle and Lyons 1996a; 1996b). Similarly, Ellis et al found that social workers viewed

formalisation of assessment as a threat to good practice but identified strongly with its objectives of consistency of approach and service user involvement (Ellis et al 1999). In relation to the latter, Irving and Gertig's study of social workers' perceptions of care management indicated their general approval, with social workers welcoming 'the clarity and formalisation of good practice that care management had brought' (Irving and Gertig 1998: 6).

These findings suggest that in changed organisational regimes, managerial tasks and the normative framework of managerialism are dispersed through organisations, with bureau-professionals becoming managers and the establishment of a more diffuse managerial consciousness. Hoggett comments succinctly '...rather than try and control professionals by managers, you convert professionals into managers' (Hoggett 1994: 43). This realignment of bureau-professionalism with the new managerial regime has not necessarily displaced bureau-professionalism, as we have seen. Needs are still the subject of 'expert transformation' through the process of assessment (Clarke and Newman 1997: 115), but organisational realignment has led to managerialism dominating bureau-professionalism's three modes of power - decision making, agenda setting and normative - which were discussed in the previous section (Clarke and Newman 1997: 82).

However, Clarke and Newman argue that the ways in which managerialism is interpreted, adapted and resisted by groups and individuals cannot be simply read off from its existence (Clarke and Newman 1997: 82). Managerialisation involves struggles over meaning, involving

‘the inflection of new patterns in pursuit of diverse occupational, organisational and social purposes. From this standpoint, managerialism is itself a field of possibilities, open to local processes of resistance, appropriation and compromise. But it also constitutes a field of normative and discursive constraints. It is the dominant formation in the field of contending positions that shape institutionalised outcomes. It forms the terrain that other positions have to negotiate, accommodate to or inflect with in practice...Managerialism has set the “rules of engagement” - the field of constraints - without having the capacity to determine the outcomes’ (Clarke and Newman 1997: 105).

Thus far the discussion of the impact of managerialism has focused on the process of reframing social work’s organisational regimes. In contrast, Howe has made a contribution which focuses on the implications of organisational reframing for the face-to-face contact between social workers and service users. He argues that neo-liberal economics has altered what ‘social work practice’ and ‘clients’ mean (Howe 1996: 93) and identifies the dominant trends as the proceduralisation and commodification of social work (Howe 1994). he elaborates some of the processes involved (Howe 1996).

First, service users’ behaviour is no longer analysed in an attempt to explain it. The service user’s performance matters, not what caused it to come about. Behaviour is assessed in terms of administrative procedures, political expectations and legal obligations:

‘Depth explanations based on psychological and sociological theories are superseded by surface considerations. It is the visible surface of social

behaviour which concerns practitioners and not the internal workings of psychological and sociological entities...Clients arrive, in effect, without a history; their past is no longer of interest. It is their present and future performance which matters. Present behaviour, which under a welfare perspective was understood with reference to past experiences, is now assessed in terms of future expectations...The evolution and development of individual personalities and social structures is downplayed' (Howe 1996: 88-89).

Second, and as a consequence, there is a breakdown of causal narratives and service users' accounts of their problems are not located and understood within a theoretical perspective whose principles govern what is said and done (Howe 1996: 90).

Third, in the absence of narrative, understanding and planned action are re-formed in the immediate context where the service user's behaviour, needs and responses meet the social worker's rules, resources and procedures and out of such meetings arise agreements, tasks and time limits (Howe 1996: 90). Leonard describes this process as leading to

'each episode of social work intervention [as] discrete and unrelated to the previous episode. Work is short-term, time-limited and brief. Each new encounter triggers a fresh set of transactions, negotiations and agreements' (Leonard 1997a: 90-91).

Finally, intervention involves classification of the service user and a matching response:

‘Social workers...identify and classify them as particular types of service user or problem-presenters. Having identified and classified the client, he or she is then eligible to receive a certain, prescribed response. This response may be a particular service, a required legal procedure or a certain kind of resource...There is no requirement to explore the causes of behaviours and situations, only the demand that they be described, identified and classified. It is the category into which the client’s behaviour or condition fits which increasingly determines the response prescribed. The social worker is not encouraged to have independent thoughts but is required to act competently. The emphasis is on what people do rather than what people think’ (Howe 1996: 91).

Clearly the implications of Howe’s analysis of developments in practice are significant for the central claims of the feminist social work literature in relation to feminist identity, egalitarian relationships and empowerment. If ‘depth explanations’ are out of vogue, if present performance is all that matters and if ‘causal narratives’ have broken down, then the central precepts of the feminist social work literature, along with any other perspective seeking to move below the surface of the problems presented to state social work, will experience greater difficulty in articulating its concerns and interests in the changed organisational regime.

Youll adopts a more optimistic stance than Howe’s in relation to the nature of practice which is associated with new managerialism. She sees new managerialism’s emphasis on outputs and outcomes, as represented in central government guidelines, as a welcome departure from a preoccupation with

process because in focusing on ends it moves away from over-rigid prescriptions of process and towards more creative and flexible approaches to practice (Youll 1996: 36). Dominelli adopts a similar position:

‘The British government is using social policy and legislative instruments to restructure the context within which social work has to operate. The Children Act, 1989, the National Health Service and Community Care Act, 1990...have fundamentally altered the statutory environment within which practitioners operate. In giving more choice to consumers and casting these in terms of citizens’ rights, these developments have provided a supportive backdrop for anti-oppressive practice’ (Dominelli 1998b: 12).

The final section in this Chapter moves away from practice and asks what these managerial developments might mean for women in management.

STATE SOCIAL WORK AND WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

Bureau-professional regimes, prior to new managerialism, have been depicted as predominantly masculine (Witz 1992). Otway argues that the gendering of social work hierarchies has continued into the era of new managerialism: ‘[It] is inherent in the framing and execution of the new guidelines and policies and has come about by a masculinisation of the managerial role and hierarchy within Social Services Departments’ (Otway 1996: 153).

The masculinisation of management is one of the most consistent themes in the feminist social work literature (Hale 1984: 167, 181-182; Davis and Brook

1985: 4; Hudson 1985: 641; Hanmer and Statham 1988: 99-100; Eley 1989; Hallett 1989: Ch.1; Hudson 1989: 86; Butler and Wintram 1991: 23; Dominelli 1991 184, 190-192; Day 1992: 25-26; Lupton 1992; Hudson et al 1994: 101-103; Hallett 1996: 12; Davis 1996: 122-125; Dominelli 1997a: 250; 1997b: 124; Mullender 1997: 42; Orme 1998: 218), with 'social work as a profession reproduc[ing] the common patriarchal pattern of women making up the base of the pyramid of management with men occupying the summit' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 113).

Reflecting on the bureau-professional regime introduced following the Seebohm Report (1968) Hudson concludes that

'social work's organisational structures have been highly influential in keeping feminism at bay...Post-Seebohm social work organisations have increasingly been structured around managerial principles. The means and methods for delineating social work priorities have become more and more based upon hierarchical principles of decision-making...In reality the structure and control of social work reflects and reinforces broader social processes of male domination in our society. Feminism's central emphasis on women participating in the decisions affecting them (as consumers and as workers) and on creating decision-making structures which are non-hierarchical very directly confronts the masculine organisational principles of social work agencies' (Hudson 1985: 640-641).

In a consideration of the impact of new managerialism, Lupton identifies

‘an increased marginality for feminist thought and practice within social services departments. The more extensive the masculinisation of the departments’ organisational cultures under the impact of the new managerialism, the more overtly masculinised will be the knowledge systems generated...It is likely that feminist-inspired research will be seen a to deliver the wrong kind of knowledge, collected in the wrong kind of way, about the wrong kinds of things’ (Lupton 1992: 102).

The perception of continuity in, and the intensification of, masculine organisational culture from bureau-professionalism through to new managerialism has been questioned, with new managerialism seen as perhaps offering new opportunities for women (Newman 1994: 182). Clarke and Newman identify some of the tensions and discontinuities initiated by new managerialism which they consider are eroding the masculine nature of bureau-professional regimes (Clarke and Newman 1997: 69-75).

First, ‘management’ is no longer a term which applies only to the most senior levels. As managerial positions have been created lower down in bureau-professional hierarchies, more women have been drawn into jobs with managerial titles and responsibilities. Second, some women have entered the higher (male) managerial preserves, albeit in highly gendered regimes of managerial power. Third, the gender dynamics of new managerialism are contradictory. The emphasis on leaner and fitter organisations has led to increased macho-management but the people orientation of new managerialism, which is a more relational approach, has led to a partial feminisation of management with a stress on communication skills, networks and partnerships. Fourth, the intensification

of emotional labour with service users and within organisations has similarly stressed the importance of 'feminine' management qualities, as management focuses on containment of uncertainty, stress and discontent.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter One, we identified a dominant stance within the feminist social work literature which regards women social workers as being able to embrace a feminist identity as the basis for engaging in egalitarian relationships with women service users which are aimed at the latter's empowerment. In taking this stance, the defining features of social work - as a state-mediated profession charged with implementing statutory duties on behalf of the state through bureau-professional regimes - were largely ignored by feminist social work writers. Accordingly, it was argued, in much of the feminist social work literature, feminist social workers are presented as essentially autonomous in making choices about the ends, as well as the means of their work with women service users, and thus being seen as transcending the implementation of duties on the state's behalf. For example, Dale and Foster whilst giving a very negative account of how welfare professionals, including social workers, can exercise control over women service users (Dale and Foster 1986: 81), conclude that

'one of the key characteristics or skills which professionals are deemed to possess is their ability to define welfare needs. It is because of these special skills that professionals are allowed so much freedom and control over their own services. This basic tenet of professionalism means that professionals will strongly resist any attempts by the state to intervene

with or restrict their autonomous definitions of welfare needs' (Dale and Foster 1986: 103).

In the light of the discussion in this chapter, Dale and Foster's conclusion seems a classic example of the conflation of ends and means. More recent feminist social work writing displays this tendency to conflate ends and means, and in the process to transcend the statutory context. For example, Dominelli maintains that feminist social workers should be 'seeking compatibility between the ends being sought and the means whereby these are achieved... [in] seeking collectivist solutions which respect the individuality and uniqueness of each woman' (Dominelli 1997a: 246) and Mullender states that 'gendering the agenda in social work, will improve both the employment context and the commissioning and delivery of every type of service' (Mullender 1997: 48).

The discussion in this chapter would suggest that conflation of ends and means in this fashion, and the consequent assumption of autonomy with which women social workers are deemed to operate, obscures the extent to which working in a state bureau-professional regime shapes the ends of the work of women social workers, whilst traditionally having allowed them discretion (or, in Derber's terms, 'technical autonomy'), as state agents, in shaping the means by which those ends are realised. Furthermore, as we have seen, discretion even at the level of technical autonomy over the means of carrying out social work now seems to be under pressure, under the influence of new managerialism.

In contrast to the assumption that the statutory context can be transcended, Dominelli and McLeod argue that 'a feminist theory and practice of social work proceeds from rather different premises than that currently

prevailing in statutory social work'. They conclude that if feminist social work is to take root in statutory settings, social work has to be transformed from bases external to statutory social work so that it is more reflective of feminist aims (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 114). They emphasise the significance of wider political influences:

'It is important to acknowledge the extent of the continued reliance of feminist work in a statutory setting on feminist action external to it...It depends on the political complexion of the local and central state governing those agencies...Feminist practice within statutory social work can be underwritten and promoted in a major way' (Dominelli and McLeod 1989: 127).

In contrast to both of these positions (transcending or transforming state social work), Wise, as we saw in Chapter One, develops a third position concerning the relationship between feminist social work and state social work, namely that they are antithetical: 'the quest for liberation sits uneasily within the framework of state-provided services...[and is] the province of political activists within various social movements' (Wise 1995: 113). On the basis of this distinction, Wise argues that the term 'feminist social work' should only be retained for alternative services for women that can truly claim to be feminist (Wise 1995: 113). She makes a distinction between feminist social work and anti-discriminatory practice and seeks an accommodation with state social work based on the latter. The analysis which has been presented of the state context points in the direction of the state context closing off specifically feminist ends for social work and would lend support to the need to question whether there is a

case for retaining the term ‘feminist social work’ with reference to state social work.

The discussion presented in this chapter has consolidated the case for research into the areas identified at the end of Chapter One and for such research to draw on women social workers’ experience of state social work as it is, particularly in the changed more managerial organisational regimes in which women social workers are now located. With regard to those regimes, two further questions can be added to the research agenda already proposed in Chapter One:

- Following the introduction of managerialism, what do women social workers identify as the current features of state social work organisations and what are their experiences of the impact of these features on their practice?
- How do women social workers regard their role/potential role as managers?

This chapter has been concerned with an account of the defining characteristics of state social work and of its organisational regimes for the delivery of services. Before turning to the research undertaken in the present project, the next chapter considers how women’s perspectives were incorporated into developments in social work education and training which were focused on the reconstitution of legitimate professional knowledge and the reconstruction of its organisational regimes. This will be the final thread in contextualising the experiences of the women social workers/practice teachers, who participated in the research.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two set out the defining characteristics of state social work and reviewed the changes in its organisational regime, from the bureau-professionalism which followed the implementation of the Seebohm Report, through to the impact of managerialism. In parallel with the implementation of the Seebohm Report, social work education was brought within a validation framework through the establishment of the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Workers in 1971.

For much of the 1970s and 1980s, this framework was permissive by today's standards, with social work education enjoying an academic variant of 'professional self-regulation' (Jones 1999: 37)¹. However, in the 1980s and 1990s CCETSW instituted a process of reform in social work education, which culminated in the restructuring of the arrangements for providing social work programmes and the reshaping of their content. As a result of the reform process, a significant measure of academic self-regulation was replaced by external regulation. This consolidation of state authority over social work education reinforced, and served as another avenue for, the tendency of managerialism to encroach on women social workers' 'technical autonomy' over the means of undertaking social work.

¹ Boswell's comment illustrates the laissez-faire approach in this period: 'As a practice teacher during the early 1970s, I recall inventing objectives and assessment criteria as I went along' (Boswell 1997: 351).

One aspect of the changes CCETSW instituted in the content of social work programmes was the incorporation of attention to gender as part of introducing a wider anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory agenda into what constituted professional knowledge:

‘It is clear that feminist ideas have influenced the CCETSW in its development of the Dip.S.W, where gender oppression is now one aspect of anti-discriminatory practice which lives at the core of its value base for social work’, even if the adoption of feminist concerns has also been seen as ‘superficial and confused’ (Wise 1995: 105).

This chapter analyses the changes which have taken place in social work education and its organisational arrangements as the third, and final, context for considering women social workers’ experiences. It does so through consideration of the following:

- historical overview
- mainstreaming gender
- competence
- partnership
- practice teaching

The historical overview charts the changes in social work education, drawing on CCETSW documents, as well as literature commenting on those documents and on the developments they set in train. The next section considers how ‘feminist concerns’ were incorporated in the reformulating of social work education and two further sections then draw out the dimensions of competence and partnership as key aspects of that reformulation. The implications for women social workers

of the mainstreaming of gender into a competence approach, which rests on partnership between employers and educational institutions, are considered in the conclusion.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

1970s: debate and indecision

Having set in place the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work, during the late 1970s CCETSW was engaged in a wide-ranging consultation process with educational institutions, social work agencies and professional bodies about the future direction of higher education social work programmes. CCETSW published three consultative documents. Consultative Document Number Three written by Reg Wright, an Assistant Director of CCETSW, attracted the most attention (CCETSW 1977). At the time, it was widely regarded as a controversial intervention in the debate about the future of social work education and sparked intense coverage in the social work press. It would appear that CCETSW had anticipated the furore which followed its publication, given the care with which the organisation distanced itself from the document, neither formally endorsing it nor even putting it to CCETSW's Council for discussion. CCETSW's Council did, however, agree to its circulation (CCETSW 1977:1).

In today's terms, the consultative document's central proposal, which sparked such controversy at the time, was modest in scope; namely, the suggestion that senior staff at CCETSW should seek to arrive at a statement about the aims of CQSW Programmes and the type of social workers that the programmes were aiming to produce. The statement was envisaged as allowing

considerable variation in approach in social work programmes and this was seen as positive. In a foreword to the paper, Priscilla Young, Director of CCETSW, stated: 'Although diversity is desirable in the style and detail of qualifying courses, a more clearly defined and explicit identity of purpose is needed' (CCETSW 1977: 2).

From the range of issues raised in Consultative Document Three one of the most significant, as far as this thesis is concerned, was the proposal that social work programmes should instil in student social workers a 'system of shared professional values, to enable them to begin to practice competently' (CCETSW 1977: 10). This proposal was widely interpreted as an attack on 'progressive' or 'radical' approaches to social work, such as feminist social work, especially as the paper went on to advocate that students should seek 'a balance between individualist and collectivist interests' (CCETSW 1977: 12), eschewing action to 'change the system' (CCETSW 1977: 11), as social workers were 'agents of controlled social change' (CCETSW 1977: 11). However, despite such (for the time) forcefully-worded statements about CQSW Programmes, CCETSW's official position was that 'it is not consistent with the Council's general approach to education and training for social work to establish national requirements for a uniform curriculum' (CCETSW 1977: 6).

Social work programmes were highly critical in their response to Consultative Document Three, which was seen as possessing 'a certain anti-intellectual attitude towards the contribution of the social sciences to social work education...and a failure to appreciate the use of research findings'² (Timms

² This charge was repeated from hereon through to the changes in social work education resulting from Paper 30, which are discussed later.

1991: 207). One group of social work academics issued a publication in response to the consultative document in which they agreed with Timms' criticisms, but also saw in the document - notwithstanding its protestations to the contrary - CCETSW's ambition 'to impose centralist control, not only on social work education, but thereby, on thinking about social work itself' (University of Warwick 1978: Introduction).

At the conclusion of the consultation period, CCETSW stated: 'on the basis of the comments received, we do not believe that the Council has evidence that it should institute immediate and radical changes in any particular direction' (CCETSW 1983 :29).

1980s: consultation and change

Despite the cautious and inconclusive statement with which the 1970s consultation was terminated, the 1980s witnessed CCETSW moving on to propose major changes in social work education through a further period of review and consultation beginning in 1982, which drew on the experience gained through the implementation of the Certificate in Social Services (CSS).

Central to its case for reforming social work education, and significant in relation to this thesis (see Chapter Two), was CCETSW's view that the then CSS and CQSW Programmes were inadequate in respect of preparing social workers to undertake competently their statutory duties: 'Neither programme (CSS and CQSW) provides adequate education and training in length and depth for the increasingly complex demands imposed on social workers. Indeed, some of those holding existing qualifications who are given professional and statutory

responsibility to protect the vulnerable have demonstrably lacked the knowledge and skills to do so' (CCETSW 1987: 10).

Although CCETSW levelled criticism at both CSS and CQSW Programmes, once the Council had announced its intention to review social work education the Association of Directors of Social Services, whilst supporting CCETSW's wish to abolish the distinction between the two programmes, insisted that 'the best of CSS' should be adopted and adapted to the rules and requirements of the new social work qualification. Jones suggests that 'the best of CSS' was seen as 'the joint management of courses and the centrality accorded to practice competence in course design and student experience' (Jones 1989: 18)³.

This second and protracted round of review resulted eventually in the publication of Care for Tomorrow (CCETSW 1987). This report constituted CCETSW's submission to government for an extra £40 million per annum in order to reform social work education. The report proposed that by the 1990s a new three year Qualifying Diploma in Social Work would be launched to replace the existing CSS and CQSW Programmes. In 1988 the government responded by rejecting CCETSW's Care for Tomorrow and withholding finance for the proposed three year social work qualification. Instead, the government committed finance for the development of National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Social Care, a two year Diploma in Social Work and a Post-qualifying Framework.

³ Later in the chapter, the significance of this intervention by Directors of Social Services Departments in shaping partnership as one of the key dimensions of change in the 1990s will become clear.

As far as the Diploma in Social Work was concerned, the government's decision resulted in the publication of Paper 30: Rules and Requirements for the Diploma in Social Work (CCETSW 1989), with proposals to replace the CQSW and CSS Programmes with a single qualification. Paper 30 marked a substantial shift from CCETSW's concerns in the 1970s and early 1980s in terms of opening up consideration of the impact of discrimination and oppression in relation to social work and, in the process, placed in the mainstream of state deliberations themes, issues and debates which had previously existed in academic and practice contexts.

A previous CCETSW publication, Paper 20.6. Three Years and Different Routes. Expectations and Intentions for Social Work Training, had already proposed that the distinctive characteristics of social work resided in a social worker's commitment to 'challenging within his/her professional/employee role, racism, sexism, ageism and other institutional and oppressive attitudes which affect the delivery of service to the clients of his/her employing agency' (CCETSW 1986:). This theme was developed further in Paper 30 (1989) in which CCETSW expressed its commitment to furthering anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice, requiring qualifying social workers to combat discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, culture and religion (CCETSW 1989: 16)⁴. In an introductory statement, CCETSW gives a definition of social work:

'Social work promotes social welfare and responds to wider social needs, promoting equal opportunities for every age, gender, sexual preference,

⁴ The revised Paper 30 (CCETSW 1991), added language, sign language and nationality.

class, disability, race, culture and creed. Social work has the responsibility to protect the vulnerable and exercise authority under statute' (CCETSW 1989: 8).

This statement captures the tension between CCETSW's recognition of, and support for, social work as a state activity (the 'exercise of authority under statute') and its movement towards inclusion of a more critical and questioning form of social work capable of promoting social welfare.

In pursuing social work's more critical mandate, CCETSW's new requirements for social work programmes did not introduce a uniform curriculum which had to be followed. Instead, each programme's curriculum had to be adjudged by CCETSW as satisfying the national criteria of competence⁵ which CCETSW had laid down. In parallel, the organisational structures for delivering social work programmes were standardised in a way which gave Social Services Departments the potential to secure a dominant voice in shaping and developing the curriculum of the programmes in which they were involved in partnership⁶ arrangements.

1990s: a more modest mandate

Only minor revisions were made to Paper 30 in its second edition (CCETSW 1991). It continued to contain a mixture of questioning critical assertions alongside the acceptance of social work's role in fulfilling what were presented as its 'neutral' statutory obligations. These conflicting messages, contained in Paper 30, represented the compromise reached between a number of

⁵ Competence will be discussed further, later in the chapter.

⁶ Partnership will be discussed further, later in the chapter.

competing voices and viewpoints within CCETSW's membership (Humphries 1997: 645).

Extensive media coverage was given to the questioning critical assertions contained in Paper 30, leading to claims in national newspapers that social work and social work education had fallen prey to 'political correctness' (see, for example, Appleyard 1993; Phillips M. 1993), and the emergence of more sustained critiques of this phenomenon (Dunant 1994). Substantial revisions were made to Paper 30, which re-emerged with a managerialist title as Assuring Quality in the Diploma in Social Work 1: Rules and Requirements (1995). At this stage, CCETSW's decision to remove anti-discriminatory practice as a central element of the qualification was undoubtedly influenced by central government concerns 'that social work education was far too preoccupied with "ologies and isms"' (Preston-Shoot 1996: 13). In the run-up to the appearance of the revised rules and requirements, Virginia Bottomley, then the Secretary of State for Health and previously a social worker, announced in a speech to the Conservative Local Government Conference that 'a National Core Curriculum for Social Work Training ...will be no place for trendy theories or the theory that isms or ologies come before common sense and practical skills' (quoted in Preston-Shoot 1996: 13). Clearly the revised agenda was leading in the direction of a no-nonsense vocational training. This agenda was produced through a partnership between CCETSW and the Care Sector Consortium, in the Care Sector Consortium's role as the NVQ Occupational Standards Council for Health and Social Care. The relationship forged between the two organisations presumably was central to the amplification of the importance of competence in

social work by CCETSW, given that the Care Sector Consortium was charged with pursuing the competence agenda and was a potential threat to CCETSW's continued existence.

The review which led to the publication of the revised rules and requirements had five stated aims:

- to achieve contemporary relevance for the qualification in the context of changing needs, legislation and service delivery
- to establish more consistent standards of outcome from Dip.S.W. Programmes
- to provide a sound professional base for a career in social work, firmly located in higher education
- to secure the place of the Dip.S.W. in the continuum of qualifications
- to promote flexible opportunities for access to education, training and qualification (CCETSW 1995: 4).

CCETSW and the Care Sector Consortium employed consultants - the National Institute for Social Work and Mainframe - to develop 'national occupational standards' for social workers on which to base the revision of the Statement of Requirements for the Dip.S.W. In order to develop the standards, Mainframe used occupational mapping techniques derived from functional analysis. These techniques were consistent with the government's general concern to place competence in learning and assessment at the centre of training for employment in a wide range of occupations, validated by nationally agreed occupational standards (CCETSW 1994). Mainframe's methodology appears to have drawn

heavily on that set out by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ 1988)⁷ and involves a descending level of detail about the social work job: Units of Competence (Competencies); each Unit of Competence is subdivided into Elements of Competence (Practice Requirements); Performance Indicators (Evidence Indicators) are then identified in the form of behaviours which suggest that each Element of Competence (Practice Requirement) is being met.

CCETSW maintained that in undertaking this process, there was 'extensive consultation, within the tight timetable requested by government' (CCETSW 1995:4), but the exercise was very different from previous consultations on the future of social work education. It was swift and prescriptive, with consultation on the detail of the proposals rather than debate about their general direction. Substantial revisions to the requirements for the Dip.S.W. were approved by CCETSW Council in February 1995. The revisions were heralded as a great success by Tony Hall (then Director of CCETSW) who stated that 'no other profession defines so precisely and comprehensively the competencies required for its newly qualified practitioners' (CCETSW 1995b).

One of the major changes in Assuring Quality in the Diploma in Social Work 1: Rules and Requirements (1995) was the move away from, what was now depicted as, the previous combative emphasis on anti-discriminatory practice and anti-oppressive practice and towards a more modest mandate for social work. This required students to develop knowledge and understanding of

⁷ The NVCQ terms are given first, (followed by the Dip.S.W. terms in brackets).

‘diversity and difference’ (CCETSW 1995: 9) and the assessment of student’s competence was to be in terms of how s/he managed diversity, using an individualistic approach:

‘This approach proclaims difference as essential in distinguishing need and prescribes responses to that need as a technical activity stripped of critical or radical ambition for change. It is essentially individualist, populist and pragmatic, and effectively operates to dissipate the politicisation of need by holding that everyone’s needs are unique and special. The model holds no hope of intersectionality between groups as it serves essentially to fragment them, but it can accommodate notions of multi-oppression in that everyone is unique’ (Williams 1999: 226).

This individualistic reading of CCETSW’s emphasis on diversity⁸ in Assuring Quality (1995) is reinforced by the fact that anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice no longer appeared as requirements in any of the core competencies. The only point at which different sources and forms of oppression emerge is as part of the requirements for the qualification under the heading ‘Ethics and Values in Social Work’. Here, it is stated that students should be aware of

‘sources and forms of oppression, disadvantage and discrimination based on race, gender, religion, language, age, class, disability and being gay and lesbian, their impact at a structural and individual level, and strategies and actions to deal with them’ (CCETSW 1995: 23).

⁸ Again, this perhaps illustrates the influence of the NCVQ framework which treats anti-discriminatory practice in an individualised and personalised way.

Any action on the part of students to ‘counter discrimination racism, disadvantage, inequality and injustice’ should take account of ‘strategies appropriate to role and context’ (CCETSW 1995: 18). Thus the tension which existed in the first and second editions of Paper 30, between the critical stance promoted by CCETSW and adherence to social work’s statutory obligations, was now explicitly resolved in terms of the latter unambiguously having precedence in constraining the former. The inability to self-censor strategies appropriately in relation to ‘role and context’, as stated by CCETSW, would presumably indicate a student who was not yet competent.

The next section traces the impact of these developments in more detail in relation to mainstreaming gender through the reform of social work education.

MAINSTREAMING GENDER

Mainstreaming gender is part of a wider ‘deployment of formerly radical themes in a new framework of regulation. The use of the term “empowerment” and the promotion of “anti-discriminatory” practice in social work illustrate this trend’ (Langan 1998: 214). In this deployment, the terms ‘anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive’ practice appear to have been used interchangeably by CCETSW. Braye and Preston-Shoot suggest that their meanings are different:

‘[Anti-discriminatory practice] is reformist, challenging unfairness or inequity in how services are delivered or removing barriers to access... [It] seeks change, but within officially sanctioned rules, procedures and structures. Anti-oppressive practice is more radical, seeking a fundamental change in power structures and exploitative relationships

which maintain inequality and oppression' (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995: 107).

They regard anti-oppressive practice as more radical than anti-discriminatory practice because it acknowledges structural inequality and exploitation in legal, social and economic relationships and seeks a fundamental realignment of power relationships external to social work (Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995: 107). As a consequence Preston-Shoot argues that the solutions to problems proposed by the two forms of practice are qualitatively different:

'Anti-oppressive practice looks for solutions...based on analysis and intervention into the context, power, culture, organisational arrangements and structural relationships which impact on users and workers. This takes workers into social and political action, challenging and enabling users to challenge how they, and services "for" them, have been perceived. This extends therefore, beyond the reformist agenda of anti-discriminatory practice which, whilst challenging unfairness or inequity, adopts a...problem solving perspective. It addresses prejudice, for instance in how services stereotype and marginalise people, but not the structures which maintain inequality' (Preston-Shoot 1995: 17).

Similarly, Phillipson also regards use of the term 'anti-discriminatory' as signifying practice which challenges unfairness, whereas 'anti-oppressive' practice 'works with a model of empowerment and liberation and requires a fundamental re-thinking of values, institutions and relationships' (Phillipson 1992: 14-15). Dalrymple and Burke see the law as the key to distinguishing anti-discriminatory practice from anti-oppressive practice:

‘It is important to note this distinction [between anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice], as all too often the terms are used interchangeably, without thought being given to the impact of both terms. For us, anti-oppressive practice is about minimising the power differences in society...Legislation which deals with issues of discrimination is specific and aimed at addressing unfair treatment faced, for example, by black people or women. Anti-discriminatory practice uses particular legislation to challenge the discrimination faced by some groups of people’ (Dalrymple and Burke 1995 3-4).

Although CCETSW did not provide such definitions with respect to its use of terminology, Paper 30 (CCETSW 1989; 1991) required students to demonstrate anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice and from then on the importance, or otherwise, of incorporating anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice in social work became the subject of an increasingly polarised debate within social work education (Pell and Scott 1995). Some social work educators considered that the requirements around anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice were ‘too emphatic and pervasive, and ultimately self-defeating’ (O’Hagan 1996: 17), others argued they were necessary but insufficient as they stood (Statham and Carroll 1994).

Nevertheless, a broad swathe of opinion within social work education regarded CCETSW’s stance (CCETSW 1989; 1991) as marking a move forward in requiring that students and practice teachers reached a ‘national standard, albeit one which did not seem to be grounded in a particularly clear analysis of the nature of discrimination and oppression’ (Mullender 1995: 61; and see

Carter et al 1992: 114). Thus, notwithstanding a lack of clarity, CCETSW was seen as taking anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice seriously (Mullender 1995: 61) and giving its 'permission' for social work programmes to address issues of discrimination in identifying and changing ideologies, structures and practices which were oppressive (Cavanagh and Cree 1996: 2).

Within this emphasis on anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice in the first and second editions of Paper 30, the requirements are at their most explicit in relation to 'race' and anti-racist practice: 'Race is given greater prominence, class, gender and disability much less so, whilst sexual orientation is overlooked completely' (Balen et al 1993: 34; and see, Wise 1995: 105). Although Lloyd and Degenhardt share this view, they nevertheless argue that Paper 30 provided a framework within which it was possible to place gender on education and training agendas, enabling 'anti-sexism to be taken seriously' (Lloyd and Degenhardt 1996: 48).

Gender may have been less prominent than 'race' in CCETSW's publications but was nevertheless placed in the mainstream of the developments discussed so far. This was not the case as far as sexuality was concerned, with CCETSW adopting an agenda in relation to social divisions which ignored 'the complexities at play when considering sexual orientation' (Trotter and Gilchrist 1996: 64). It has been suggested that the outcome of CCETSW directing programmes to 'tackle issues of inequality and structural oppression' was that 'race and gender now feature prominently on many curricula...in comparison, however, sexual orientation is given nothing more than lip service' (Logan and Kershaw 1994: 62).

CCETSW's requirements as far as gender was concerned were set out as follows in Paper 30 (1989 - and not amended in 1991 version):

- combat other forms of discrimination, based on age, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, culture and creed (p. 10, para. 1.19);
- develop an awareness of the inter-relationship of the processes of structural oppression, race, class and gender (p.16, para.2.2.3);
- develop an understanding of gender issues and demonstrate anti-sexism in social work practice (p. 16, para.2.2.3).

As mentioned in the last section, CCETSW's expectations in relation to anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice in Assuring Quality in the Diploma in Social Work 1: Rules and Requirements (1995) were diminished and in their place came an emphasis on difference and diversity. As with the editions of Paper 30, the terminology used is not defined but the use of 'diversity' represents a move away from the previous focus on the language of social divisions: 'Diversity is reflected through religion, ethnicity, culture, language, social status, family structures and lifestyle' (CCETSW 1995: 28). A somewhat vague and general reference is made to 'sources and forms of oppression, disadvantage and discrimination and their impact at a structural level and individual level in society' (CCETSW 1995: 20) and gender is mentioned only once. CCETSW requires that students 'have knowledge and understanding of the diversity of individual lifestyles and communities in the UK; of the significance of poverty,

racism, ill-health and disability; and of gender, social class and sexuality' (CCETSW 1995:9). Students should also have

'learning and practice experience in delivering social work services to children, families and communities in ways which are responsive to and respectful to different faiths and cultural traditions, neither compounding disadvantage arising from race and social class, nor stigmatising people by reason of age, disability, illness, poverty or other difference' (CCETSW 1995: 9). (Gender and sexuality are presumably included in 'other difference').

Having set out the shifts in CCETSW's requirements, it is worth noting that after the introduction of the Dip.S.W. in 1989, CCETSW produced a series of papers which were given the generic title Improving Social Work Education and Training. 'Race' and disability were the subject of publications in this series and the third publication was on gender issues and anti-sexist practice (CCETSW 1992). In the foreword, Rachael Pierce, Assistant Director of CCETSW, saw this publication as promoting and heightening awareness of gender issues on social work programmes.

It would be tempting to conclude that because discussion of gender was legitimated by CCETSW, women's experiences of state social work were now to be firmly located within mainstream social work theory and practice. On the contrary, particularly in the context of the emphasis on competence (see below):

'While issues relating to gender and women are being incorporated into the mainstream of social work education, the space for feminist debate is closing off. Instead of more opportunities for feminists to develop diverse

and challenging ways of thinking and practising feminism within social work, the new disciplines of the Diploma may produce less' (Graham 1992: 54).

There seems to be some evidence to support this view. Although Phillipson saw her publication as the beginning of discussions on gender issues in social work education (CCETSW 1992: 5-6), four years later, as we have seen, gender slipped almost completely from the social work education agenda as contained in Assuring Quality in the Diploma in Social Work 1: Rules and Requirements (1995). A process of mainstreaming seems to have been followed by a process of downgrading. This progression from mainstreaming to downgrading can be attributed to a number of problematic aspects in the developments which took place.

First, in the first and second editions of Paper 30 people were seen as firmly located within specific social divisions. Although general references were made to interconnections between social divisions, the overall emphasis implied rigid membership of particular social divisions (CCETSW 1989; 1991). As a consequence, in seeking to follow CCETSW's requirements there was a tendency to search for forms of practice which relied on categories and procedures. In contrast, as we have seen, Graham challenges this 'search for anti-oppressive orthodoxy, a set of certain and fixed procedures for dealing with the complex issues raised by gender oppression' (Graham 1992:56). Featherstone and Fawcett identify the pressure introduced by the Dip.S.W. to retreat into orthodoxy, based on category construction, with students finding it hard to

‘break out of the language of monoliths and accept understandings that are fluid and provisional’ (Featherstone and Fawcett 1995b: 14).

The second difficulty with CCETSW’s discussion of anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice, particularly in the first and second editions of Paper 30 (1989; 1991), is that it is written in oppositional terms. CCETSW required students to ‘challenge and confront institutional and other forms of racism...and combat other forms of discrimination based on age, gender...’ (CCETSW 1989:10, my emphasis). Instead of the emphasis in CCETSW’s later auto-critique on the ‘tone’ it adopted at his earlier stage (see above), perhaps the question to be asked is whether it is possible to challenge and combat discrimination and oppression, when they are firmly located within the context of state social work. Macey and Moxon comment that ‘the realism of aiming to effect structural change from a grassroots level is generally questionable’ (Macey and Moxon 1996: 308; and see Hugman 1996). As Jordan argues, statutory social work fits more easily into a liberal value framework, and the implication of CCETSW’s reforms is that ‘power, privilege and prejudice must be effectively challenged, but without upsetting the legal and moral foundation (economic and political individualism) on which they are built’ (Jordan 1991: 5).

A third problem which arises out of the way anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice is discussed by CCETSW, is the implicit hierarchical ordering of oppressions mentioned earlier in the chapter, with ‘race’ being given greatest prominence by CCETSW and gender being given some attention, whereas sexuality is largely absent (Wise 1995; Dominelli 1997b: 162-163). In

effect women's interests are downplayed overall and lesbian women's interests are then marginalised.

Fourth, there has always existed within CCETSW's framework for the Dip.S.W. a tension between on the one hand a traditional liberal social work agenda (see Jordan's quotation above), framed within the statutory context, and on the other hand a more radical agenda of promoting anti-discriminatory/anti-oppressive practice and confronting structural oppression. Logan and Kershaw conclude that 'a new imposed triad of radical, liberal and controlling agendas is thus the context in which social work education in the 90s is taking place' (Logan and Kershaw 1994: 74). Traditionally, the values of social work are seen as 'clients' rights to dignity, privacy, confidentiality and choice and protection against abuse and violence' (CCETSW 1989: para 2.2.2). Jordan suggests that this traditional list of values 'has its roots in liberal ethics, market-minded politics, casework and law' (Jordan 1991: 5). These values fit with the 'overall tone of the ['Paper 30'] requirements, with their priority on legal and procedural knowledge, and the application of technical skills' (Jordan 1991:5). The radical agenda, on the other hand, has been satirised as CCETSW having legislated concerning

'which values social workers should hold, thereby determining the moral ground which practitioners should occupy. Possessed of the moral truth, CCETSW's high priests have sent out the word which all must follow and by which all will be judged, censured and watched (Webb 1991: 151).

Fifth, the strengthening in the revised rules and requirements (CCETSW 1995) of the emphasis on traditional social work values meant a move towards a more

individualised way of working, with an emphasis on ‘appropriate client-worker relationships’ and ‘contractual arrangements’ (Dominelli 1996: 171). Dominelli suggests that in the present context it is even harder for social workers to look at organisational and structural oppression and they are just ‘tinkering at the edges’ (Dominelli 1996: 171). This argument is reinforced by Jones who maintains that ‘CCETSW has successfully managed a transformation of social work education where the concerns of the disadvantaged and marginalised, which should figure at the centre of social work education, have been swallowed up and have disappeared into the needs of the state agencies’ (Jones 1995: 6).

All in all, the mainstreaming of gender seems to have been a mixed blessing at best in terms of promoting women’s interests and to have dwindled in significance as the social work education reforms were consolidated. To understand how the reforms placed further constraints on women social workers, we turn to a discussion of competence, followed by a consideration of partnership.

COMPETENCE

The term ‘competence’ has never been adequately defined⁹ in any of the three main publications about the Dip.S.W. (CCETSW 1989; 1990; 1995). Nevertheless, competencies are seen as the key to establishing national criteria for standardising social work education and training. Competence is the foundation for the whole edifice on which the restructured social work education

⁹ Given the influence of the NCVQ framework on CCETSW’s proposals perhaps a definition from the National Council for Vocational Qualifications could be substituted as a working definition: ‘The ability to perform work activities to the standards required in employment’ (NCVQ 1988: 2).

has been built. Criticisms of the latest rules and requirements (CCETSW 1995) have come from many sources within social work education. At a national conference convened by social work educators the conclusion reached was that social work education had become driven by new managerialism and had 'reached the end of the road: stuck in a cul-de-sac of regulation and conformity that stifles innovation and change' (Committee for Social Work Education and Policy, quoted in O'Hagan 1996: 3). The main criticism has been that the emphasis was on making competencies (-'increasingly defined by legal statute and underpinned by bureaucratic procedure' [Jones 1993: 15]-) relevant to the needs of social workers' employers, with the competence-based approach to social work being seen as: preparing practitioners for a market-driven environment (Dominelli 1997b: 171), subordinating social work education to the concerns of management (Langan 1998: 216) and 'reinforcing managerial practices' (Adams 1998: 257).

Other arguments which have been advanced against competence-based social work education are, first, that competence is a minimalist concept: 'It does not embrace the creative, intuitive and anti-oppressive nature of progressive work with people' (Issitt and Woodward 1992: 52); second, that competencies regulate the way in which social workers work (Jones 1993: 15; Humphries 1997:656); third, that competencies encourage the development of superficial politically correct attitudes rather than a critical analysis of social work theories and practice (Cannan 1994: 11; Dominelli 1996: 162); and, finally, that competencies technicalise social work: 'Service delivery has become fragmented and reduced to discreetly identified parts or empirically stated

technical competencies and quantifiable indicators” (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996: 52). Adams’ pessimistic conclusion is that social workers have been transformed from professionals to technicians as a result of the narrowing of ideas consistent with outcome-based activity, the focus on easily measurable aspects of people’s performance and the concentration on techniques rather than critically reflective practice (Adams 1998). This represented the latest stage in CCETSW’s subordination of social work education to the concerns of management, the marginalisation of academic social science and the elevation of vocational training, whilst the anti-discriminatory agenda offered a radical image for CCETSW as a highly conformist agency (Langan 1998: 216). The radical gloss kept on board academics who might otherwise have been sceptical (Dominelli 1997b: 162).

These arguments against a competence-based approach are grounded in a wider analysis which locates the changes discussed thus far in social work education in the developments that have taken place generally within state social work (see Chapter Two); developments which are seen as having been the result of successive governmental regulation, surveillance and rationing (Jones 1995: 7; Dominelli 1996: 165). Jones, for example, condemns CCETSW for yielding to ‘employer pressure for a social work qualification which has been intellectually gutted to conform to their demands for a bureaucratically compliant workforce’ represented in a ‘shift towards an instrumental vocational assessment’ (Jones 1993: 15). Brewster points to the minimal representation from social work educators on the CCETSW Council, which was responsible for making the shift to competence-based education, and the overwhelming

representation of the interests of the new managers of social work (Brewster 1992: 88-89). The presence of these managers was indicative of the shift towards a partnership model for social work education.

PARTNERSHIP

As we saw earlier in this Chapter, ideas about partnership between social work agencies and educational institutions have circulated since the late 1970s and have guided the gradual development of CCETSW policy (Payne 1994: 59). For example, in its report on the 1970s consultations referred to in the first section, CCETSW began to recognise the tensions that existed between higher education institutions and social work agencies, mainly centred around the planning and monitoring of placements and the disparity in views about social work skills and objectives (CCETSW 1983)

The experience of CSS was drawn upon in CCETSW's review of CQSW Programmes. CSS was seen as embodying features that employers wanted; social work training which was tailored to meet the needs of the particular social work agency (CCETSW 1983). During the 1970s, employers had expressed their discontent with CQSW Programmes which were perceived as turning out students unable to do the job employers required of them and as populated by academics who were failing to inculcate students with familiarity with the law and respect for agency procedure (Dominelli 1997b: 159-162; Jones 1999: 45). Increased negative media coverage of child abuse investigations resulted in the Association of Directors of Social Services complaining that social workers were no longer being equipped during their training to deal with child care issues

(Cannan 1994: 12). CSS offered a different, partnership-based approach which began to address some of the shortcomings about which employing agencies had complained.

The next stage in CCETSW's development of partnership came in the 1980s when CCETSW asked for comments from agencies on CQSW programmes. Although the response was mixed, CCETSW highlighted the fact that several agencies had emphasised 'the importance of harnessing together educational and agency resources, citing the value of their experience in planning CSS training through joint management committees, and contrasting this with their view that there was little opportunity for employers to exert influence on CQSW courses' (CCETSW 1983: 17). These employer pressures 'led CCETSW to emphasise collaboration between agencies and educational institutions in its formal decision to set up a new form of social work education, embracing both CSS and CQSW models' (Payne 1994: 61). In Care for Tomorrow, CCETSW stated that 'the primary aim of social work education and training is to produce a competent and accountable professional....educational institutions and agencies will be required to collaborate in the development and provision of the new programmes' (CCETSW 1987: 21).

The introduction of the Dip.S.W. brought with it compulsory partnerships between educational institutions and social work agencies. CCETSW stated in Paper 30 (CCETSW 1989) that the success of the Dip.S.W. was dependent on universities, polytechnics and colleges working collaboratively with social work agencies: 'Collaboration between educational institutions and social services agencies is a central feature of CCETSW's new Diploma in Social

Work' (CCETSW 1990: 1). In order to support these collaborative partnerships, development money was made available from central government, although it was hoped that savings would be made through effective partnership arrangements. CCETSW's arguments in support of partnerships were:

- Both field and academic learning are equally important and need to be closely integrated (CCETSW 1991: 43);
- By having agency input, programmes could make the curriculum more relevant in preparing students for work in the personal social services (CCETSW 1987: 9);
- 'Partnerships are essential to achieve a high quality of education and training and to increasing the quantity of Dip.S.W. holders that the personal social services require to meet client needs' (CCETSW 1991: 43);
- More output would be achieved if resources are pooled (CCETSW 1991: 43);
- Improving quality means raising academic standards and making programmes more relevant. This requires 'programmes to be more responsive and permeable to contemporary social work practice' (CCETSW 1991: 43).

Brewster argues that the emphasis on partnership, geared to employment-led training, was a smoke-screen: 'When CCETSW talks about employment-led training it should really be saying managerial-led training'(Brewster 1992: 88). Further, Brewster states that new appointments to the advisory staff of CCETSW were drawn almost exclusively from the lower managerial positions in social

work agencies. Managers also dominate representation on Dip.S.W Programmes' partnership bodies:

‘This new agenda has altered the balance of autonomy hitherto enjoyed by social work education and instead through “programme partnerships” has brought it into a direct and subordinate relationship if not with employers, then at least with the new manager cadres of the personal social services’ (Webb 1996: 186).

By these various means, the prominence of new managerialism in state social work (see Chapter Two) can be seen as being reproduced in social work education and , as a result, ‘CCETSW’s concern to institutionalise a more collaborative approach to social work training may prove to be an additional force in consolidating white male decision-making power’ (Carter et al 1992: 121). For some it was seen as simply representing increased interference over what was being taught on the Dip.S.W., with the involvement by agencies representing increased surveillance and supervision: ‘[social work education] tied itself up in partnerships and bureaucratic procedures that were immensely time-consuming and often of little benefit’ (Novak 1995: 5). For others, CCETSW’s ‘structural position is set four-square within what were once called the ideological state apparatuses: “surface” exhortations to repudiate discrimination sit alongside what is in effect an endorsement of neo-liberalism’ (Webb 1996: 186).

In the next section we will see that much the same model, albeit on a smaller scale, was applied to practice teacher accreditation.

PRACTICE TEACHING

The central momentum of CCETSW's reforms was propelled through the content and structure of Dip.S.W. Programmes. However, CCETSW extended its approach to partnership arrangements beyond the management and monitoring of Dip.S.W. Programmes. It went on to suggest the failure of many social work agencies and educational institutions to collaborate in the past had also been in evidence in the 'arrangements and standards of practice teaching' (CCETSW 1987: 21). In order to rectify this, CCETSW incorporated practice teaching in its proposals to develop a framework of post-qualifying education and training. In 1989, alongside the revisions to the Dip.S.W., CCETSW also devised a five point plan for practice teaching. The two developments at the centre of the plan were the introduction of a new partnership-based system for the training, assessment and accreditation of practice teachers and the approval by CCETSW of agencies considered to be providing effective practice learning.

Practice teachers would be awarded a qualification issued by CCETSW on the successful completion of an approved Practice Teaching Programme. Using interim arrangements, it would be possible for social work agencies to designate members of staff as 'accredited practice teachers', where necessary, for up to five years but increasingly accreditation would be achieved only through an accredited programme. In parallel, in order for an agency to be accredited it had to produce a description of the opportunities available for students to learn and practice 'anti-racist, anti-sexist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice, and to enable them to work effectively within a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society'(CCETSW 1991b: 5). The requirement was couched in similar

terms for practice teachers undertaking the Practice Teaching Award: 'to help students to develop anti-racist, anti-sexist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice, and the capacity to work effectively within a multi-racial and multi-ethnic society' (CCETSW 1991b: 5).

CONCLUSION

The original agenda of CCETSW's Paper 30 (CCETSW 1989) can be regarded, at least in part, as influenced by a range of interests, including those of women, in setting goals and purposes (see Chapter Two on the 'ends' of social work) for addressing discrimination and oppression as emphasised in Paper 30. Hugman argues that the dominant view, from within various perspectives but nevertheless across this range of interests, was that social work would become increasingly incompetent and irrelevant unless it transformed its mandate in accordance with societal developments (Hugman 1996: 142-143).

However, the anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive content was attacked by, amongst others, the Conservative government, which, as we have seen, ordered a review of Paper 30, based on a much narrower and functional analysis of the sort of social work needed to deliver objectives which the government considered to be acceptable. The end result was a technical, formulaic and prescriptive approach to students' behavioural performance in assessed practice placements, geared to on-the-job competencies. Accountability to employers for educational provision, against the backdrop of managerialism (see Chapter Two), framed the social work tasks to be undertaken. It is an end result which allows Jones to claim that 'there is no comparable system of social

work education in the world, which is so nationally uniform, uninspired and tailored so closely to the requirements of major state employers' (Jones 1996: 191).

CCETSW's limited capacity to act as a buffer against state encroachment was dispensed with easily, as fledging alternative definitions of the ends of social work were overridden and state authority over social work education was consolidated. These developments thus illustrate and underscore the extent to which, through another avenue (this time social work education), women social workers' 'technical autonomy' over the means of undertaking social work is derived from, and constrained by, the ends of the state (see Chapter Two).

One element in the emergent and fleeting alternative definitions of social work was the mainstreaming of gender as part of a wider agenda on anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice. The faltering progress of this process of mainstreaming has been identified, together with some of the attendant difficulties, not least gender's location in competence-based and partnership-provided social work programmes. Furthermore, the narrowing of scope implicit in the competence-based approach and the establishment of partnership regimes is not conducive to opening up egalitarian relationships with women service users, as proposed in the feminist social work literature (See Chapter One).

These developments in social work education have been the third strand in contextualising women social workers' experiences¹⁰. The particular relevance

¹⁰ This discussion has identified the developments in social work education which were part of the context against which the research reported in Section B of the thesis was undertaken. Since completing the research, further developments have taken place. It was decided that the development, regulation and awarding functions of CCETSW should be carried out by a General Social Care Council (Secretary of State 1998, cmnd. 4169, White Paper). CCETSW's other functions will be taken over by the industry-led Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services (Balloch et al 1999: 187).

of this contextual strand, as far as the present research is concerned, is that the women social workers/practice teachers who were invited to participate had been exposed to the developments in social work education which have been the subject of this chapter. They had attended a Practice Teaching Programme and had achieved the Practice Teaching Award. They had contact with Dip.S.W. Programmes and they worked with students on placement. They had, therefore, been exposed to an agenda around anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice which has already been identified as a component in the present research. (See Conclusion of Chapter One). As we have seen, in contrast to CCETSW's, and much of the feminist social work literature's, loose use of terminology, some social work writers have stressed the importance of defining terms like 'anti-discriminatory' and 'anti-oppressive', and have suggested that the choice of words used by social workers is significant and can indicate the standpoint they adopt in their practice (Burke and Harrison 1998: 230).

As we have noted, the data from the research presented in Section B will include consideration of women social workers' stances in relation to anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice. Before turning to those research findings the methodology underpinning the research in which the women social workers' participated is presented in the next chapter, which begins *Section B: Considering Women Social Workers' Experiences of State Social Work*.

SECTION B

CONSIDERING WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF STATE SOCIAL WORK

Section A provided three strands in contextualising the present research. Chapter One reviewed the feminist social work literature and, in the course of doing so, produced a provisional research agenda which was posed as a series of questions in response to that literature. (See Conclusion of Chapter One.) Chapters Two and Three developed that agenda by providing analyses of state social work and social work education.

The research agenda which was developed in Section A can now be brought together and put forward as the basis for the research undertaken¹, which is the subject of Section B; namely consideration of women social workers' experiences:

- Do women social workers primarily align themselves with a feminist social work identity? (Chapter One: feminist social work literature)
- Do women social workers see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory practice? (Chapter One: Langan's and Wise's critiques of the dominant stance in the feminist social work literature; Chapter Three: social work education)
- What are women social workers' experiences of forming egalitarian relationships with women service users? (Chapter One: feminist social work:)

¹ Each item on the research agenda is accompanied by a note of the principal chapter location(s)/subject area(s) from which it arose in Section A.

- In what ways is the term ‘empowerment’ used by women social workers? (Chapter One: feminist social work; Chapter Three: social work education)
- Following the introduction of managerialism, what do women social workers identify as the current features of state social work organisations and what are their experiences of the impact of these features on their practice? (Chapter Two: state social work).
- How do women social workers regard their role/potential role as managers? (Chapter Two: state social work.)

This research agenda is capable of generating data which might make two empirical contributions. First, it begins to respond to the lacuna in the feminist social work literature concerning research into how the proposals of the dominant paradigm play out in state social work. Second, it also addresses a shortage of data about how social work’s changed organisational regime is being experienced on the ground².

In Section B: Considering Women Social Workers’ Experiences of State Social Work, Chapter Four sets out the methodology of the research. Chapters Five to Eight report on the project’s findings. Chapter Five provides data on feminist identity, Chapter Six examines egalitarian relationships and empowerment in practice settings and Chapter Seven explores the impact of managerialism.

² Existing empirical studies (see, for example, Satyamurti 1981; Pithouse 1987) shed light on the bureau-professional regime, prior to the impact of new managerialism (see Chapter Two).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains how the research agenda (see introduction to Section B) was channelled into a small-scale exploratory case study. The data from the case study will be presented in subsequent chapters.

The chapter begins by reviewing some aspects of the debate about feminist research. Background information on the present case study is then provided, before turning to a more general consideration of the use of case studies. The methods used to collect data for this case study are then explored, namely the use of documentary sources and semi-structured interviews, and the limitations of the study are noted.

FEMINIST RESEARCH

There has been a debate about whether there are specific and distinctive feminist research methods. Some researchers have argued for a particular emphasis on the qualitative interview because it has been seen as amenable to feminist purposes and processes. Others have contended that feminist perspectives can be pursued through a range of methods. In relation to the former position, Oakley's critique is well known (Oakley 1981). She identifies researchers' 'embeddedness in a particular research protocol. This protocol assumes a predominately masculine model...This model stresses such values as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and science' (Oakley 1981: 31). Oakley sets

out how she developed a style of interviewing which did not reduce women to interview fodder, placing emphasis instead on non-hierarchical interviews and the necessity for the interviewer to invest her personal identity in the interviewing relationship (Oakley 1981: 41). She considers that this sort of relationship lessens the risk of objectifying women and is 'an essential way of giving the subjective situation of women greater visibility...a strategy for documenting women's own accounts' (Oakley 1981: 48).

A number of contributors to this debate have argued against conflating feminists methods into the qualitative interview (Pugh 1990; Stanley and Wise 1983; Kelly et al 1994). Reinharz, for example, argues that feminism supplies the perspective and particular academic disciplines provide the methods: 'There is no single feminist way to do research. There is little "methodological elitism" or definition of "methodological correctness" in feminist research. Rather there is a lot of individual creativity and variety...Feminist research is amoeba-like; it goes everywhere, in every direction. (Reinharz 1992: 243)

With feminism being seen by many contributors to the debate as providing the perspective, rather than dictating the use of particular methods, interest has fastened on to the implications of that perspective in terms of how research is undertaken, with regard to the power dimensions of the research process (Humphries 1994: 185). Kelly (1988) argues for the term 'feminist practice', rather than 'feminist methodology', in order to indicate the importance of paying attention to power in research and feminist principles have been formulated to 'guide research, whilst not dictating the use of specific methods. Thus the methods used are as diverse as the researchers and their questions' (Mason 1997:

11). These principles have been articulated in a number of versions, of which Mason's is the most concise. She proposes three principles:

- 'the use of women's experiences as a resource for research;
- the improvement of women's lives through research ; and
- the reconceptualization of power, so the researcher is on the same plane as the subject' (Mason 1997: 12).

These principles are uncannily reminiscent of the feminist social work literature's proposals for practice (see Chapter One). Feminist research, like feminist social work, is presented as a personal and political practice:

'The amount of angst suffered by and enormous efforts expended in the attempt to create an egalitarian and reciprocal relation within the research process would seem to imply that there is some perfect model of researcher/researched relation to be achieved and that if we succeed, then this counts as being or acting feminist' (Glucksmann 1994:150-151)

As with feminist social work, discussion has taken place about the ways in which egalitarian, woman-to-woman relationships can be developed, particular in interviews (see, for example, Graham 1980, 1984; Oakley 1981; Finch 1984; Kelly et al 1992). For example, Finch argues that feminist researchers share the same powerless position as that of women they are researching (Finch 1984: 72). This account of the researcher/researched relationship parallels the feminist social work literature's emphasis on commonality between women social workers and women service users. Finch suggests that the other side of the commonality coin is that Oakley's approach to interviewing 'can be easily broken down into a set of techniques, which can then be divorced from the moral basis in feminism which

Oakley adopts' (Finch 1984: 55) and that there is therefore the potential for exploitation in the easily established trust between women (Finch 1984: 78). This suggests that the choice of a semi-structured interviewing approach still leaves a measure of direction over the structure and focus of the discussion in the hands of the researcher and women researchers can often use this to elicit information from other women with ease (Oakley 1981; Finch 1984; Graham 1980; 1984), capitalising on women's shared experiences as a way of obtaining information through the interviewer/interviewee power relationship.

Not surprisingly, therefore, a number of objections and qualifications have been raised in relation to this stance in feminist research. Cotterill, for example, takes issue with Oakley's position and maintains that many women find it easier to talk to a researcher precisely because she is a stranger rather than a friend (Cotterill 1992). On a more general level, McRobbie (1991) suggests that shared oppression cannot be assumed unproblematically and Stacey argues forcefully that egalitarian reciprocal relationships can lead to 'exploitation, betrayal and abandonment' not present in positivist research where the 'deal' is clearer (Stacey 1988: 21).

Whilst not necessarily arguing against more participative relationships between researcher and researched (Roberts 1981, Stanley and Wise 1983), care needs to be taken in not confusing such participation with power. For example, Mason suggests that researcher and researched are 'on the same plane' when 'power is balanced through the inclusion of the researcher's values as part of the data and through respect for the role of the participants' (Mason 1997: 25). The former might indicate a commendable approach to openness and the latter might

suggest a desirable commitment to courtesy, but whether this places the researcher and researched 'on the same plane' is at the least debatable as other contributors to the debate have made clear.

At the stage of writing up the research, participants have little or no control over what is produced by the researcher (Cotterill and Letherby 1993). It is the researchers who make choices and decisions about how to interpret the words of the researched and who select extracts for quotation: 'We dissect, cut up, distil and reduce their accounts' (Edwards and Ribbens 1998: 38). The products of the research reflect another aspect of inequality. They 'are produced by the researcher and it is her version of reality that is seen to have cognitive authority...No matter how we deny it we are still operating within an environment where the ethic prevails that those who publish research are experts and those who are written about are not' (Wise, quoted in Ribbens 1989: 587). The conclusion reached by Edwards and Ribbens is that 'we have to accept that the entire research process is most often one of unequals and that, as researchers, we retain power and control over conceiving, designing, administering, and reporting the research. Researcher and researched have a different and unequal relation to knowledge' (Edwards and Ribbens 1998: 139).

There are examples of researchers who have resisted yielding to this logic and who have followed through the implications of their feminist principles. Kelly, for example, when researching women's experiences of sexual violence followed up her initial interviews with women with further contacts asking women's opinions as the themes emerged from the data and her analysis developed, thus allowing the participants in her research to have an input into

analysing their data and shaping the research findings (Kelly 1988). Pahl suggests that equal working relationships with participants means breaking down the power in the research relationship by incorporating participants in the design of the whole research project (Pahl 1989) and Abbott and Wallace propose a model of collective co-operative research, with the researcher helping women to undertake their own research and analysis and make their own decisions about how their findings will be used (Abbott and Wallace 1990).

Whilst these examples and suggestions are admirable, they may be feasible only rarely and are likely to remain the exception rather than the rule, again paralleling much of the experience of feminist social work. In this case study, the full participation of women social workers in the interviews was encouraged, as was their amendment/ratification of the written records of their interviews but participation beyond the collection of data did not occur. Active participation in the interviews was facilitated by the absence of any significant power relationship between myself and the participants, as will become clear in the account of the background to the case study which is provided in the next section.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRESENT CASE STUDY

As the Introduction to the thesis and Chapter One indicated, my interest focused on women social workers' experiences in state social work. As the discussion in Chapter Three made clear, there had been developments in social work education which had accorded some attention to women and gender and this appeared likely to be a fruitful area with which to connect the present research. However, I did not want to study the experiences of student social

workers who might be practising social work in conditions which, as we saw in Chapter One, are in some respects different from those experienced by the more seasoned qualified practitioner (Wise 1995: 105 and 111). Nevertheless, there did seem to be some advantage to be gained from linking the study to social work education as this was likely to increase the possibility of identifying social workers who were addressing women's interests in their practice. Locating women social workers who had completed a Practice Teaching Programme, and who were interested in participating in the research, provided a link between developments in social work education and the state social work context. This represented a 'best case scenario' for the research. These women social workers/practice teachers would have considered women's perspectives as part of their practice teacher training. They would also encounter such perspectives through their contact with DipSW Programmes and through having DipSW students with them on placement. In other words, a purposive sample of practice teachers was at least as likely, and probably more likely, to find women social workers who were engaged in trying to address women's interests in their practice as any other sample of state social workers.

Enquiries about a particular Practice Teaching Programme seemed to support this view. Examination of the Programme's Handbook and other documents and an interview with the Programme's Director suggested that the Programme placed a great deal of emphasis on anti-discriminatory practice. For example, as part of their assessment for accreditation, participants in the Programme were required to submit an assignment on how they had incorporated anti-discriminatory perspectives into their social work practice. Women social

workers taking part in the Programme were addressing women's perspectives as a consequence of having to become familiar with first Paper 30 and later on Assuring Quality in the Diploma in Social Work 1: Rules and Requirements (1995) (see Chapter Three), in preparation for working with students within CCETSW's framework for the DipSW. They were also having to address themselves to the Rules and Requirements for the Practice Teaching Award (CCETSW 1991b) which, as we saw in Chapter Three, required them to demonstrate that they could 'help students to develop anti-racist, anti-sexist and other forms of anti-discriminatory practice'.

A purposive sample (Blaxter et al 97: 79³) of women social workers/practice teachers was, then, considered to be well-placed to reflect on the developments which contextualised their practice, as presented in Section A. Their experiences were derived from being on the receiving end of those developments and having to react to them on a daily basis in their working environments. Accessing women social workers through a Practice Teaching Programme produced a case study which was located in three working environments, consisting of the local authority Social Services Departments which support the programme.

Having outlined the background to the present case study, the discussion now turns to a more general consideration of the use of case studies, before identifying the methods used to pursue this project.

³ The criterion for a purposive sample is that potential participants are identified on the basis that they are likely to be relevant to the subject being studied. I have attempted to show why I consider this to be the case.

USE OF CASE STUDIES

Case studies have been used extensively in social research (Yin 1984: xiii) and have been commended by Yin for use 'when the focus is on contemporary phenomena within some real-life context' (Yin 1984: 13). Such contexts can be investigated at individual, organisational, political and policy levels and, in so doing, can provide multiple sources of evidence which illuminate the concerns of the research being undertaken in a holistic and contextualised approach (Yin 1984: 14). Having raised general contextual issues from the political and policy levels in Section A, we will be turning to look at the experiences of women social workers at the individual and organisational levels in the remainder of Section B in an exploratory case study, which seeks to illuminate the general by examining the particular (Yin 1984: 13).

Of specific relevance to this thesis is the use of case studies to study work contexts and social policy implementation. In relation to work contexts, Salaman argues that the case study provides 'a method of understanding organisational structures, processes and dynamics. It is thus an essential element in any form of social enquiry into work organisations' (Salaman 1986:112-113; and see Bryman 1989: 173). As far as the study of policy implementation is concerned, Hill identifies studies of policy content (of the kind undertaken in Chapters Two and Three) and studies of the way in which policy content has an impact (see the remainder of Section B), as being two key perspectives in policy case studies (Hill 1997: 2-5). With respect to policy impact case studies, Bryman highlights their role in illuminating 'the effects of implementation on everyday activities' (Bryman 1989:172). As Glennerster comments, the perspective and situation of

professionals charged with carrying out policy is crucial to judging policy outcomes (Glennister 1983: 6). It was to such perspectives, situations and everyday activities - located in work contexts which are sites of policy implementation - that the present case study was addressed.

Notwithstanding the widespread use of case studies, and their perceived benefits in studying work contexts and policy implementation, arguments have been advanced against this approach to research. The criticisms centre on case studies being used to collect data from samples which have not been drawn rigorously from wider populations. The issue of their lack of representativeness is then related to difficulties in generalising findings from one case or a small number of cases (Pugh 1988; Bresnen 1988; Dunkerley 1988). On this basis, it is argued that case study evidence can be dismissed as idiosyncratic, since the data derived might be atypical. In relation to this particular study, two points can be made in response to this potential criticism.

First, the consortium of three Social Services Departments, involved in the Practice Teaching Award Programme, escapes the full strength of the criticism that a case study may be a consideration of a unique context. Consortia with broadly similar organisational characteristics, working to the same rules and requirements for the Practice Teaching Award and preparing practice teachers for working within the rules and requirements for the DipSW, have been established nation-wide. In addition, within the consortium the three Social Services Departments have broad similarities, shared with Social Services Departments elsewhere, which derive from their position as public agencies in local government with statutory responsibilities. Whilst these aspects do not necessarily support an

argument that this was a watertight representative case study, they do support a claim for it being, at the least, an 'indicative case study'. Such a case study considers locations which are similar in crucial respects to others which might have been chosen, allowing it to be seen as having implications for other situations and suggesting its relevance to future case studies (Platt 1988).

Second, criticism centring on the lack of representativeness of case studies and, as a consequence, difficulty in generalising from them may highlight the issue of the reliability of a particular piece of research, as conventionally understood⁴, but neglect the issue of validity, that is the extent to which a study is using methods which are in tune with the area being researched and examining what the researcher is seeking to examine. Thus, validity is concerned with the degree of confidence which can be accorded to the approach adopted in a research project, whilst reliability is more concerned with whether the approach can be replicated in every detail. It has already been suggested that the present case study can claim to be regarded as indicative. Even if it is regarded more modestly as simply a valid, illustrative, one-off account, the data it provides is open to full or partial confirmation or refutation from future studies of women and state social work, regardless of the methods by which those studies might collect their data.

Having directed attention to potential criticisms which have been levelled at the case study approach, it is worth drawing together four of its advantages, some aspects of which have already been mentioned in passing. First, the case study is suited to the needs and resources of the small-scale researcher. It allows,

⁴ i.e. Is it possible to repeat the techniques used in exactly the same way and get exactly the same results?

indeed endorses, a focus on just one example or a small number of examples (Blaxter et al. 1997: 66). Second, case studies can be used to test out theories, models or perspectives, through the strong emphasis placed on everyday activities and the context in which they take place. Third, case studies can provide data on the detail of day-to-day organisational functioning in areas which are not amenable to investigation by other methods such as the quantitative questionnaire. Fourth, Reinharz maintains that research using case studies is essential in order to develop an understanding of a range of women's experiences and to prevent those experiences from becoming invisible, distorted and generalised (Reinharz 1992: 164): 'Theory must remain at best hypothetical, at worst unreal and barren, unless we have detailed case studies...dealing with the experience of selected groups of women' (Carroll quoted in Reinharz 1992: 164). Reinharz concludes that 'case studies are essential for putting women on the map' (Reinharz 1992: 174) in exploring uncharted issues.

As we saw earlier, when charting issues case studies usually draw on more than one research method. The methods used in the present research project are now outlined.

METHODS

The research design of this particular case study involved two sources of data: documentary sources and semi-structured interviews. These are considered in turn.

Documentary sources

One of the research methods used in this study involved the analysis of documents. Whereas the literature review (Chapter One) contextualised the research project in terms of framing the research agenda, the accounts of state social work (Chapter Two) and social work education (Chapter Three), whilst contributing to that agenda, were also part of the case study approach in that they identified developments which contextualised women social workers' experiences at the political and policy levels. Whilst Chapter Two relied heavily on secondary sources to contextualise state social work in preparation for examining women's experiences, Chapter Three drew extensively on primary sources to contextualise social work education, in a way which was informed by the analysis of state social work (developed in Chapter Two). Documentary sources can fulfil a number of different functions:

'They can provide information on issues that cannot be readily addressed through other methods; they can check the validity of information derived from other methods: and they can contribute a different level of analysis from other methods (such as a gap between official policy and practice)' (Bryman 1989: 150).

As far as this study is concerned, the documents from CCETSW spanned a 20 year period, enabling me not only to locate developments in social work education within a socio-historical perspective⁵ but also allowing me to chart the changing nature of what social work education is considered to be. Two examples illustrate this: in relation to the former, the restructuring of social work education's

⁵ It has been suggested that it is easy to ignore the wider socio-historical context when studying participants in organisations (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980).

organisational regime and in relation to the latter the shifting of gender into mainstream debates followed by its subsequent downgrading (see Chapter Three).

Any involvement in using documentary sources of data has to acknowledge that documents are social products (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 135). As a consequence, documents need to be viewed within the context in which they were produced and 'have to be interpreted not just consulted' (Sapsford and Jupp 1996:145). Furthermore, 'the document may be located within a wider social and political context. Researchers then examine the factors surrounding the processes of its production as well as the social context' (May 1993: 138). In order to aid my interpretation of the CCETSW documentation (see Chapter Three), I located them in developments in state social work (see Chapter Two).

Documents are not just located in a particular context, they also present a particular version of events:

'...it is easy to forget that these sources do not just arise automatically through some natural process. They may look authoritative, as if they could not have been produced in any other way. But, in effect, all these sources are the results of human activity. They are produced by human beings acting in particular circumstances and within the constraints of particular social, historical or administrative conditions' (Finnegan 1996: 143).

In order to develop a questioning stance to the documents, I read the commentaries of other authors on the documents, as well as the documents themselves (see Chapter Three). This sensitised me to looking for interpretations

of what was considered to be problematic, the sort of explanations which were given or implied and the solutions proposed to the problems identified, as well as becoming more aware of to whom the documents spoke on whose behalf and on whose behalf (Jupp 1996). The latter was important in terms of identifying the authors' interests and motives (Atkinson and Hammersley 1983:135), for example, CCETSW needing to adapt to the NCVQ approach to competence if it were to survive and the influence of central government in the reform of the DipSW following the political correctness debate.

In reading the documents themselves, I considered three main dimensions:

- How the documents came into being
- Who produced the documents and for what purpose
- My reactions to the tone, language and content of the documents (Adapted from Blaxter et al 1997: 187).

I then abstracted from each of the documents key themes (Atkinson and Hammersley 1983: 131), some of which I grouped into historical periods and others which were accorded specific attention because of their relevance for the case study (see Chapter Three).

Semi-structured interviews

The participants

42 of the 61 women who had completed the Practice Teaching Award Programme at the time this phase of the research began (October 1996) were still engaged in practice teaching. With the agreement of the Director of the Practice Teaching Programme and the manager in one of the Social Services Departments

who had line management responsibility for the Programme on behalf of the Consortium, I wrote to these 42 women. I asked if they had an interest in women's perspectives on social work and whether they would be interested in participating in the research. Twenty practice teachers identified themselves as having an interest in participating in the research. Thus the sample was not only purposive (see above) but also self-selecting⁶. In the case of this study, I have already suggested that there was some advantage to be gained from linking the study to social work education, through the identification of a purposive sample of practice teachers, as this was likely to increase the possibility of discovering women social workers who were seeking to address women's interests in their practice. The final (self-)selection of women practice teachers, on the basis of their interest in women's perspectives on social work, further increased the likelihood of homing in on participants who would shed light on the problems and possibilities of addressing women's interests.

The participants in the interviews were asked for biographical details about themselves: their age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, whether or not they had a physical impairment, length of time in social work, current job and area of practice in social work and when they achieved accreditation as practice teachers. This information is reproduced in the table below.

⁶ It was also a convenience sample in terms of what was possible in relation to undertaking a part-time PhD. So, to summarise, the research used a purposive, self-selecting convenience sample.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Physical Impairment	Sexuality	Length of social work experience	Current post	Area of work	Year of accreditation
Linda	46	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	26	Manager	Community care	1996
Candy	34	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	12	Social Worker	Community care	1995
Cindy	33	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	11	Senior S.W.	Child care	1996
Hilary	37	Asian	No	Heterosexual	14	Senior S.W.	Child care	1992
Olive	42	African-Carib	No	Heterosexual	20	Manager	Child care	1994
Theresa	56	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	26	Senior S.W.	Community care	1993
Zina	45	East African Asian	No	Heterosexual	7	Social Worker	Child care	1995
Liza	43	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	17	Manager	Child care	1995
Ruth	47	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	5	Social Worker	Child care	1993
Donna	34	Ugandan African	No	Heterosexual	14	Senior S.W.	Child care	1995
Janis	42	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	20	Senior S.W.	Child care	1995
Gaye	41	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	17	Social Worker	Both	1995
Anita	51	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	28	Senior S.W.	Child care	1993
Elsie	50	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	7	Social Worker	Community care	1996
Iris	32	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	9	Senior S.W.	Child care	1996
Gita	50	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	15	Social Worker	Community care	1995
Helen	45	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	15	Senior S.W.	Child care	1994
Angela	43	UK-Euro	Yes	Lesbian	25	Social Worker	Community care	1995
Amy	42	UK-Euro	No	Heterosexual	18	Manager	Community care	1995
Denise	30	UK-Euro	No	Lesbian	4	Social Worker	Child care	1995

Table 4.1: Biographical information on participants

The women in the sample were aged between 30 and 56 years. The sample included four Black women and sixteen white women; two lesbians and eighteen heterosexuals. Only one person identified herself as having a physical impairment. The length of time they had spent in social work practice ranged between ten and twenty-eight years. Four of the women were managers, eight were senior social worker posts and eight were field social workers. Ten of the women were

working in the community care field, nine in child care and one social worker covered both community care and child care as an out-of-hours duty worker. All of the women were in full time posts and had achieved Practice Teacher Accreditation between 1992 and 1996.

Approach to interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used in which the topics to be covered were predetermined, by the research agenda (see Appendix Two). The interview guide was sufficiently flexible to allow modifications to be made to the interviews as they progressed, following the flow of the discussion. This style of interviewing was adopted in order to engage the participants in the construction of the data - 'telling it like it is' (Graham 1984:105)- rather than operating on the assumption that a research agenda from the literature should determine the course of the interview completely (Finch 1984; Graham 1980 and 1983; Oakley 1981). Mason refers to this as 'qualitative interviewing'. It is used when the researcher wants to: 'interact with people, to talk to them, to listen to them, and to gain access to their accounts and articulations' (Mason 1996: 40).

The quality and depth of data produced by this sort of interviewing has been noted elsewhere (Graham 1983; Finch 1984; DeVault 1990). For example, Finch comments: 'I expected to have to work at establishing something called rapport. In my experience, such efforts are normally unnecessary' (Finch 1984: 72). In the present study, it seemed reasonable to anticipate that using such an approach in interviews with women social workers would allow access to their experiences in state social work.

Interviewing Arrangements

The interviews took place between January and April 1997. All of the interviews lasted for at least one hour. The majority took place in the participants' workplaces. Only one of the participants asked to meet outside of the work setting and this was for her convenience. In advance of the interview the participants were sent a letter outlining the nature of the project (see Appendix Three). The interviews were focused around the research agenda set out in the introduction to Section B of the thesis, using an interview guide (see Appendix Two). I summarised the areas of the research to be covered at the beginning of each interview to try and ensure that each participant was confident that there were no hidden agendas. I also used this as an opportunity to stress that I was interested in the interview being used as a vehicle for their accounts of their experiences. I assured them that their anonymity would be preserved when the data were written up. All of the participants agreed to the tape recording of their interviews.

Following the interviews, typed copies of transcripts were sent to participants for checking and additional comments were invited. Five participants responded by correcting minor transcription errors. No-one added any additional information.

Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is 'a process of making sense, of discovering a structure in the data and giving this meaning and significance'

(Jones 1985: 56). When drawing categories out of the data for analysis, 'researchers cannot have "empty heads"' (Stanley 1990: 22). They interpret and theorise data. This implies that analysis of data is a highly personal, interpretive activity: 'What we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (Geertz 1973: 9, quoted in Leonard 1997: 64).

After transcribing the tapes, the initial ordering of the data was accomplished by listening to the tape of each interview until a sense of the whole interview was attained and then its structure and its themes were mapped out. After this mapping on an interview by interview basis, I listened to the tapes again. This time I focused on the detail within the themes and divided the transcripts into chunks which were collated across the interviews to correspond with the categories of analysis. I had some preconceptions about the categories for analysing the data, generated from the research agenda, which had been shared with the participants. However, I was also aware of these categories being amended by other themes emerging from the participants. For example, the language they used to describe the type of social work in which they were engaged, and its relationship to new managerialism, centred in part around their references to 'core business' (see Chapter Six). After the participants drew my attention to this concept, I went back to the literature and this concept then appeared in Chapter Two, as well as in the data.

Clearly no statistical significance can be attached to the data. However, in the following chapters numbers and majority/minority views are indicated when that is considered useful in clarifying aspects of the data.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT CASE STUDY

A feature of the present study was my dual status as an insider/outsider. Although I am presently an outsider as far as direct involvement in social work practice is concerned I have, and was known by the participants to have, insider knowledge. This had the advantage of hastening the process of familiarity with the issues, the participants and their work settings but my shared understanding probably made me less probing in some ways than an outsider would have been, for example in the extent to which I did not question or ask for explanation or elaboration of much of the social work terminology being used. I was probably less probing in this regard than an outsider would have been.

CONCLUSION

Having reviewed aspects of the debate about feminist research, background information on the present case study was provided, before turning to a more general consideration of the use of case studies. The methods used to collect data for this case study were then outlined, namely the use of documentary sources and semi-structured interviews. Now that an account of how the present case study was conducted has been provided, Chapter Five begins the presentation of the data which relates to women social workers' identities.

CHAPTER FIVE

IDENTITIES, IDENTIFICATIONS AND STANCES

Research questions:

- Do women social workers see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory practice?
- Do women social workers primarily align themselves with a feminist social work identity?

INTRODUCTION

The review of the literature in Chapter One considered the body of feminist social work writing and the inclusion of feminist social work contributions into more general social work texts. In the course of that review, it became apparent that the overriding emphasis in the literature is on the possibility of women social workers' identification with the term 'feminist', as an identity which provides a stance for engaging in egalitarian relationships with women service users, which aim at the latter's empowerment. This Chapter explores women social workers' experiences of identities, identifications and stances, whilst Chapter Six pursues egalitarian relationships and empowerment.

In Chapter One, we saw that the feminist social work literature stresses the open and eclectic nature of the term 'feminist'. We also saw that Langan and Wise argue for a different approach which moves the emphasis on to anti-discriminatory social work. Langan regards this as a wider approach capable of embracing manifold oppressions affecting the lives of women (Langan 1992) and Wise suggests that although such an approach can be informed by feminist

analysis, together with analyses from other subjugated groups, this is different from the dominant paradigm's depiction of feminist social work (Wise 1995).

Chapter Three picked up the way in which anti-discriminatory practice had become part of the mainstream agenda in CCETSW's reform of social work education. In its documentation, CCETSW touches briefly and generally on matters which relate to women and this typifies its loose use of anti-discriminatory terminology. As an alternative to CCETSW's loose use of terminology, Chapter Three indicated that some social work writers stress the importance of defining terms like 'anti-discriminatory' and 'anti-oppressive' with more precision and suggest that social workers' choice of terms signifies the stance they adopt in their practice. In essence, 'anti-discriminatory practice' is seen as reformist and 'anti-oppressive practice' is seen as radical (Phillipson 1992; Preston-Shoot 1995; Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995; Dalrymple and Burke 1995; Burke and Harrison 1998).

In contrast to these demands for terminological precision, Stanley (see Chapter One) is less confident of a dichotomous approach to definitions. She suggests that terms like 'women', 'feminism' and 'gender' are used in different ways by women. Some women use them 'strategically', some women use them 'accidentally', whilst for others 'their choice is an indication of clear political and analytical intention'. Stanley adds a note of caution about such categorisation: 'It should be recognised that a variety of terminological usage's co-exist, sometimes indicating deep conceptual and political difference and disagreement, sometimes indicating nothing so much as casual choice' (Stanley 1997: 11).

Having taken note of these different positions on possible identifications and stances for women social workers' identities in Section A, they were distilled into the research agenda set out for Section B. (See Introduction to Section B). The participants were given the opportunity to express their identifications and the stances they adopted in their own terms, in relation to three areas which were covered in the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix Two). First, the participants were asked to give a term which indicated their identifications and stances in relation to social work. Second, the participants were asked to give a term which indicated their identifications and stances in relation to work with women. Third, the participants were asked whether 'feminist' was an aspect of the identifications and stances they adopted.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND STANCES IN SOCIAL WORK

Anti-oppressive practice and anti-discriminatory practice

The women social workers were asked about the terms they would use to identify the stance they adopted in social work¹ and their reasons for their use of those terms. Eight of the participants chose the terms 'anti-oppressive practice' and 'anti-discriminatory practice' (See Table App.4.1). Four (Ruth, Gita, Donna, and Hilary) of the eight participants who selected both of these terms saw them as not having clear definitions: 'I feel comfortable with both terms' (Ruth).

Six of the eight participants (Linda, Candy, Donna, Hilary, Theresa and Olive) regarded the terms as carrying messages about their identifications and

¹ The interview guide is given as Appendix Two and a fuller representation of the responses of the participants for this Chapter are given in table form in Appendix Four. Apart from any tables produced in the body of this Chapter, all other references to tables in this Chapter are to tables contained in Appendix Four.

stances in relation to social work. For two of them (Donna and Hilary), clarity of definition was not seen as essential to indicate that an identification and a stance was being adopted. Thus, Donna regarded 'anti-oppressive practice' as signifying practice which was 'more down to earth' and Hilary focused on the 'anti-' prefix as being more significant than either of the terms to which it was linked, because 'anti-' had strong, proactive connotations for her.

For the other four (Linda, Theresa, Candy and Olive) of these six participants, the distinctions they made about how they used each of the terms was related to the specificity, or otherwise, of the practice described. Linda's distinction between the two terms lay in their usefulness in clarifying whether general or specific practice was under consideration. Like Linda, Candy saw 'anti-oppressive practice' as a more general term than 'anti-discriminatory practice'. Theresa used 'anti-oppressive' to indicate support for oppressed groups and 'anti-discriminatory' to refer to particular pieces of work, as did Linda. Olive reserved use of 'anti-oppressive practice' for the institutional level and used 'anti-discriminatory' to identify personal dimensions and groups experiencing discrimination. Although the definitions of these four participants were not uniform, they were the only participants who made distinctions about the usage of 'anti-oppressive' and 'anti-discriminatory' and, in doing so, they came closest to the position of the social work writers who argue for such distinctions to be made (Phillipson 1992; Preston-Shoot 1995; Braye and Preston-Shoot 1995; Dalrymple and Burke 1995; Burke and Harrison 1998. - see Chapter Three). All four of these participants had been not only practice teachers but also had been closely involved in developments in social work

education in a number of different roles and so might have been exposed to more debate around the use of terminology than the other four participants.

Anti-oppressive practice

Of the nine participants preferring the term ‘anti-oppressive’ (see Table App.4.2), eight of them (Helen, Liza, Amy, Elsie, Cindy, Janis, Zina and Denise) valued the term because of the breadth of issues they saw it as encompassing: “‘Anti-oppressive practice’ is about not oppressing any client. I feel comfortable with this term’ (Zina). In addition, Angela saw the ‘anti-’ prefix as signifying the adoption of a proactive stance and Janis suggested that the term ‘anti-oppressive practice’ highlighted being personally implicated in discrimination and the significance of power.

Anti-discriminatory practice

Two (Gaye and Anita) of the three participants who used the term ‘anti-discriminatory’ (see Table App.4.3) valued it for the same reason that eight of those who used ‘anti-oppressive’ valued that term, namely for the breadth of issues ‘anti-discriminatory’ was regarded as encompassing: “‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ covers everything’ (Anita). Iris regarded the term as indicating a commitment to countering the Social Services Department being implicated in discrimination and Gaye saw it as more political and proactive than other terms.

Difficulties in identifying terms

Four of the participants commented on the difficulty they had in identifying a term which reflected their stance in social work. Although they all went on to state a preference for one or more terms, they indicated that their choice was somewhat arbitrary:

‘I sat on a training day not very long ago, trying to tease out the difference between these terms, “anti-oppressive”, “anti-discriminatory”, “equal opportunities” and I don’t think I was very much the wiser at the end of the day’ (Gita).

Summary

The responses of the participants are summarised in Table 5.1 in relation to the terms they used, with the responses of participants who used both terms ‘anti-oppressive’ and ‘anti-discriminatory’ broken down further into those who used those terms interchangeably and those who used them distinctively as discussed above.

Non-oppressive	Anti-discriminatory	Anti-oppressive	Anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive	
			Inter-changeable	Distinctive
1	3	8	4	4

Table 5.1 Terms used by participants in relation to their identifications and stances in social work.

Patterns

The data were examined to see whether there were any patterns in the responses according to the participants' workplace locations, their ethnicity and their sexuality.

Workplace location

Tables App.4.4 to App.4.6 group responses with reference to the workplace location of participants. Those tables indicate that participants' choice of terms with which they identify does not appear to correlate with their workplace location. However, the four women social workers from 'B' Social Services Department noted that in their day-to-day work they have to comply with a Departmental stricture to use 'non-discriminatory', regardless of how they themselves would want to represent their identification and stance in social work. The context of these references to 'non-discriminatory practice' is 'B' Social Services Department's production of a document called Fairness in Practice: Policy, Practice and Procedures to Maintain and Promote Non-Discriminatory Social Services (1994). The document stresses that services should be appropriate to the needs of service users from minority ethnic groups and that choice should be offered to service users irrespective of 'origin, status, gender, age, belief or contribution to society'. (Disability and sexuality are not mentioned.) The emphasis on the term 'non-discriminatory' in that document has been reinforced consistently by the Director of 'B' Social Services Department and has become one of the hallmarks of 'B's organisational culture, hence the comments from these four participants.

Although not mentioned at the stage in their interviews when identifications and stances in social work were discussed, two of the participants stated later that ‘equal opportunities’ was a term that they would use in ‘C’ Social Services Department. For example, Olive highlighted the need to practise within the Department’s policy of ‘promoting anti-discriminatory practice in line with the Social Services Department’s Equal Opportunities Policy’ and Candy thought the term ‘equal opportunities’ was probably used more in ‘C’ Social Services Department than ‘anti-discriminatory practice’: “‘Equal opportunities’ is seen to incorporate all the social divisions, speaking to service users and workers’. Mission Statements for particular teams, formulated within the Equal Opportunities Policy, were considered to be influential in relation to women social workers’ practice:

‘Every team has to develop their own Equal Opportunities Statements. I suppose in [‘C’] actually, “equal opportunities” is used more than “anti-discriminatory” or “anti-oppressive”, and so we have this statement that we worked on last year, when the team split up into various groups to look at issues like, gender and staffing, equal opportunities in relation to staff, service users, people with disabilities and then from those working parties, the Equal Opportunities Statement was formulated ‘(Candy).

Ethnicity

Tables App.4.7 and App.4.8 bring together the responses from Black² and white women social workers. Although three of the four Black women social

² Four of these participants referred to themselves as ‘Black’, adding more detail about how they saw their ethnic origin (Asian-Punjabi; African-Ugandan; East African Asian; African-Caribbean).

workers adopted the same term, 'anti-oppressive practice', with the exception of Donna's and Hilary mentioning the lack of precision with which the terms are used, the responses are quite disparate. Whilst seven of the white women social workers preferred the term 'anti-oppressive practice' and five of them used the terms 'anti-oppressive practice' and 'anti-discriminatory practice' there were no patterns in the use of the terms.

Sexuality

Tables App.4.9 and App.4.10 set out the responses of heterosexual and lesbian participants. There is no pattern in the way the same term, 'anti-oppressive practice' was used by the two lesbian participants. Whilst eight of the heterosexual participants used both terms 'anti-oppressive practice' and 'anti-discriminatory practice' and six of them used the term 'anti-oppressive practice', there is no pattern in the usage of the terms.

Overall Comment

When given a free choice, there was little consistency or pattern in the usage of different terms by participants. This could be regarded as emerging from, and reflecting, a more general state of imprecision in definitions of terminology (see Chapter Three) and/or it could be that the terms were invested with specific and individual meanings by the participants. Two of the three workplace locations had some effect on the terminology used by the participants to indicate their identifications and stances in social work, but there was no apparent pattern in terminology usage in relation to ethnicity and sexuality.

Of particular significance for this thesis is that when given a free choice, none of the terms selected by the participants mentioned ‘gender’, ‘women’ or ‘feminist’ at any stage in the discussion. This would seem to suggest that this group of women social workers adopted terminology in their day-to-day work which encompassed a range of social divisions, a position closer to that suggested by Langan and Wise than that of the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature (see Chapter One).

In order to elicit the specific identifications and stances of participants in relation to addressing the interests of women, within these broader practice stances, the participants’ responses along that dimension are now presented.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND STANCES IN RELATION TO PRACTICE WITH WOMEN

Anti-oppressive practice

Helen and Janis saw the term ‘anti-oppressive practice’ as embracing work in relation to any social division and regarded it as unnecessary to be more specific about addressing women’s interests (see Table App.4.11): ‘All my work falls under “anti-oppressive practice”. I would class any kind of work as “anti-oppressive practice”’ (Helen).

Terms referring to women

Although six of the participants used various terms which laid the stress on ‘women’ (‘women’s perspectives’, ‘women-centred’, ‘womanism’ ‘women’s issues’ - see Table App.4.12), the reasons given for their usage were all concerned with seeking overarching terms which were inclusive of all

women or all issues impacting on women. Thus, Olive, in passing, dismissed ‘feminism’ as a term because she considered it excluded some women:

‘Well I generally try and use “women-centred” or “womanism”, simply because for me these terms cover all women, regardless of what woman you are, whether you are a Black woman, a disabled woman, a middle-class woman, whereas some of the other terms like “feminism” are very exclusive of certain groups of women, whereas for me, womanism suggests that you look at things from a woman’s point of view’.

Terms referring to gender

Eight participants used terms which referred to ‘gender’ (‘gender issues’ and ‘gender awareness’ - see Table App.4.13). Iris and Cindy opted for ‘gender issues’ and ‘gender awareness’ respectively in order to indicate a wish to move beyond a concern only with women. For the remainder, the reasons they gave for their use of their particular terms remained vague.

Sexism

Gaye and Amy preferred the term ‘sexism’ to indicate oppression against women, with the rider from Amy that the sexism would have to be ‘overt’ in order to be so described (See Table App.4.14).

Feminist

Angela and Candy opted for the term ‘feminist’, on the basis of self-identification and alignment with the term (see Table App.4.15).

Summary

The responses of the participants are summarised in Table 5.2 in relation to the terms they used.

Anti-oppressive	Women	Gender	Sexism	Feminist
2	6	8	2	2

Table 5.2 Terms used by participants for their identifications and stances in relation to work with women.

Patterns

The data were examined to see whether there were any patterns in the responses according to the participants’ workplace locations, their ethnicity and their sexuality.

Workplace location

Tables App.4.16 to App.4.18 group responses with reference to the workplace location of participants. Four of the six participants from ‘C’ Social Services Department used terms referring to ‘women’ and six of the ten participants from ‘A’ Social Services Department used terms referring to ‘gender’. No explanation is provided by them for linking this usage to their departmental location and there is no apparent reason for doing so, as I have been unable to discover distinctive terminology in either Department which equates with that used by the participants.

Ethnicity

In Tables App.4.19 and App.4.20, the responses from Black³ and white participants are grouped together. Two of the Black participants used terms which refer to women and the other two used a term which refers to gender. The two Black participants who used terms referring to women did so because they were perceived to be inclusive of all women (see above). There is no apparent pattern in the use of terminology by white participants.

Sexuality

In Tables App.4.21 and App.4.22 responses are grouped together from lesbian and heterosexual participants. There is no apparent pattern in the use of terminology.

Overall comment

Although the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature takes an eclectic approach to the term ‘feminist’ (see Chapter One), ‘feminist’ is only picked up at this stage of the interview by two of the participants, when asked for a term to describe their identification and stance in relation to addressing women’s interests. The remainder of the participants had a preference for terms which they regarded as inclusive and which were connected to ‘women’, ‘gender’ and ‘sexism’. This again suggests a commitment to a broader anti-discriminatory approach. Indeed, in the case of two of the participants, they did not see the necessity to move beyond the term (‘anti-oppressive practice’)

³ All four of these participants referred to themselves as ‘Black’, adding more detail about how they saw their ethnic origin (Asian-Punjabi; Black African-Ugandan; East African Asian; African- Caribbean).

which they gave earlier in the interview and simply repeated its use in relation to women.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND STANCES IN RELATION TO 'FEMINIST'

During the discussion with the women social workers of the terms they used to refer to their stance in relation to addressing the interests of women, only two of the participants had designated themselves as 'feminist'. All of the participants were then asked if they would describe themselves as 'feminist'.

Eleven of the participants said that they would describe themselves as feminist. Six did not consider themselves as 'feminist' but said that they drew on feminist principles in social work. Three did not consider themselves as 'feminist'. The eleven participants who described themselves as 'feminist' were sub-divided into two groups. Two of the participants within the 'feminist' group were the two who had designated themselves as 'feminist' earlier in their interviews in response to discussion about their identifications and stances in their work with women. The remaining nine, despite their willingness to describe themselves as 'feminist', indicated difficulties they had with the term in relation to what it meant to them and how it was perceived by others. In other words, although identifying themselves as 'feminist', they did not align themselves with the term unproblematically and introduced qualifications about their use of the term. Following this sub-division of the majority group, four groupings were identified.

Feminist

The first grouping contained the two participants who had identified and aligned themselves with 'feminist' earlier in the interview:

'I call myself a feminist. I mean there are probably quite a few different definitions. In terms of, in that I work towards getting sort of women's issues on the agenda, I think it is a personal and a political thing, definitely. I mean in terms of being aware of issues around women and trying to empower women in their lives, that's how I would see myself as a feminist' (Candy);

'I would describe myself as a radical feminist. I am a lesbian and a feminist. I am committed to being visible as a lesbian because I believe that maintaining one's identity in comfort is a basic human right' (Angela).

Feminist with reservations

The second grouping consisted of nine practitioners who considered themselves to be 'feminist' because they drew on feminist principles in social work. They saw feminist principles in social work as being concerned with valuing and validating women service users:

'I would see myself as feminist within certain frameworks, as being more a person who is interested in women being valued' (Theresa);

'I do think that women's views are very valid, that women are very oppressed and they get quite a bad deal, in a lot of aspects of our society, and that we've got to stand up for that and we've got to be heard' (Ruth);

‘The positive bits for me within feminism are the bits that actually enable value to be given to women’s experiences’ (Linda).

However, this grouping did have reservations and qualifications about the term ‘feminist’, particularly in wanting to distance themselves from any political connotations that ‘feminist’ might have:

‘I mean the first time someone said to me, I think you adopt a very feminist approach, I was sort of, “Oh! I’m not a feminist”, you know, and I think that’s because of some of the connotations that are around, about feminism and for me being “woman-centred” doesn’t carry those negative connotations and so it allows me to be a feminist but in a way that I actually find acceptable’ (Linda);

‘I’m wary of the word feminist but I think I feel comfortable with it myself because in life roles generally, I’m a woman first and a social worker next or whatever, you know? So I feel comfortable in that I am a feminist because I am female and I work from that point of view. What I am wary of is the feminist with a capital “F”, and what other people think about that’ (Elsie).

Four of this grouping of participants mentioned the word ‘radical’ as a connotation of ‘feminist’ with which they did not wish to be associated:

‘I would link myself more to valuing women than seeing myself as being oppressed by men, so its not sort of radical feminism. I draw on feminist principles but not radical feminism’ (Theresa);

‘I feel that I am a feminist and yet I’m aware that there will be people who are quite radically feminist who would think that I’m not. So I think

because of my feelings about valuing women that to me makes me a feminist, but I appreciate that to other people, that that isn't sufficient and that hasn't gone far enough, just sort of general principles, and general values' (Ruth);

'The negative bits I suppose are the sort of bra-burning mob radical bits, because I don't see myself as a radical' (Linda);

'I don't agree with radical feminism. It becomes competitive and loses its meaning' (Donna).

Two others, although designating themselves as 'feminist', said they were covertly so, being concerned about identifying themselves publicly as 'feminist':

'I would say I am a feminist, but I'm not, sort of an overt one I suppose. I mean, I've tried to read feminist theoretical stuff but I find there is a particular language that's used in feminist books which I find really hard going' (Amy);

'I think I'd see myself as a feminist but I don't think I would tell people I was a feminist as such' (Gaye).

Not feminist but drew on feminist principles

The third grouping consisted of five participants who did not consider themselves to be 'feminist' but said that they drew on feminist principles in social work. Although she saw herself as drawing on feminist principles, Cindy used the term 'gender awareness' to describe her work and considered that this term was better suited to her work setting and her involvement in the recruitment, selection, training and support of foster carers. She said that she

consciously avoided the term 'feminist', as she considered it to be too complex and political for work with foster carers:

'When we're looking at issues of placement, there may well be issues with regard to males. I'd probably use the word "gender". There's something about it not being so political. And also I think, having said that, I think, even with using the word "gender", you need to be clear about what you're saying, but the word "feminist" is probably the more complex' (Cindy).

Janis found aspects of feminist research helpful in practice:

'I would not call myself a feminist, but I very much approve of feminist principles, the equality of women and equality of opportunity, so if it is relevant I would look at feminist perspectives. I mean particularly working with young people like anorexics, where the feminist research is quite useful' (Janis).

Not feminist

The last grouping contained four participants, who did not consider themselves to be 'feminist' and did not see themselves as drawing on 'feminist principles'. Two of them associated their standpoints with either feeling that they had not experienced oppression as women, or with being concerned that feminism could oppress men:

'I've never thought of myself as a feminist. I never had a sort of bent towards feminism, I think, because the passion wasn't there because it

had never meant that much to me. I haven't had to fight for my rights as a female' (Gita);

'I'll be totally frank, I believe, although it's probably not a popular view, especially not with feminists, that it doesn't help to have a label as a "feminist" in that way. I see myself as equal to everybody else and them equal to me and I know that women have been oppressed for a long time, kept down, but I don't particularly want to perpetuate a similar oppression of men, you know. I still take the view that I'm equal and that people are equal to me' (Helen).

The other two participants had clear views on the oppression women experienced but had anxieties about feminist social work not recognising the realities of women service users' situations and thereby putting women service users in a difficult position:

'I don't find a feminist perspective helpful. I find it difficult because feminist social work puts women service users in difficult positions, giving them options which are not realistic. So, I'm a realist' (Liza).

Similarly, for Olive, as we saw earlier, the term 'feminist' was problematic because she thought it was addressed to white middle-class women and assumed that women service users had choices:

'Well for me feminism doesn't actually address issues around Black women and working class women necessarily, because it somehow suggests that women have choices and for many of the women that we work with, in social services, they have very few choices, so I'd rather use a "woman-centred" approach where I can look at women in whatever

situation that woman finds herself to be in, rather than looking at feminist perspectives, which I think exclude Black women and working class women particularly, and I think women with disabilities’ (Olive).

Summary

The responses of the participants are summarised in Table 5.3 in relation to how they saw themselves in relation to the term ‘feminist’.

Feminist	Feminist with reservations	Not feminist but draw on feminist principles	Not feminist
2	9	5	4

Table 5.3 Participants’ responses in relation to the term ‘feminist’.

Overall comment

At one end of the continuum of responses are two participants who regard themselves as ‘feminist’ and who have maintained that identification from earlier in the interview. At the other end of the continuum are four participants who reject the term ‘feminist’. Of the remaining fourteen, five more participants do not regard themselves as ‘feminist’ but find principles within ‘feminist’ which are useful. Nine participants regard themselves as ‘feminist’ but have reservations about the use of the term. On the one hand, the positioning of these fourteen participants in relation to ‘feminist’ could indicate the failure of the ‘evangelising’ eclectic strategy of feminist social work (see Chapter One), given the level of ambivalence which they expressed. On the other hand, these

participants' stances could be regarded as indications of the success of this strategy, namely that 'feminist' principles have some appeal beyond the ranks of (in this case two) women social workers who regard themselves as unambiguously 'feminist', even extending their appeal to participants who state that they are not 'feminist'. What is clear is that for the majority of the participants, their engagement with what 'feminist' meant, fed into a broader anti-discriminatory agenda, as suggested by Wise and Langan, rather than steering them towards feminist social work as portrayed by the dominant paradigm(see Chapter One).

CONCLUSION

We now return to the research questions with which this chapter began.

- Do women social workers see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory practice?

With regard to the light the data shed on this question, we have seen that for all of the participants, their identifications and stances in relation to social work were either 'anti-oppressive practice', 'anti-discriminatory practice' or a combination of the two. As noted previously, the lack of consistency or pattern in the use of different terms by participants could be regarded as emerging from, and reflecting, a more general state of imprecision in definitions of terminology (see Chapter Three) and/or it could be that the terms were invested with specific and individual meanings by the participants. Either way, the participants do see themselves as engaged in anti-discriminatory and/or anti-oppressive practice,

with some of them having to modify their preferred terms in the workplace in order to comply with the terminology of their employing departments.

- Do women social workers primarily align themselves with a feminist social work identity?

None of the participants aligned themselves with the identification and stance which is proposed in the feminist social work literature in the sense of embracing a feminist identity which infused all aspects of their experiences in social work.

Two of the participants, Candy and Angela, who had the strongest identification with the term ‘feminist’, could be seen as representing the position put forward by Langan and Wise, which was recapitulated at the beginning of the chapter. The stance of these two participants is to regard their feminist identification as contributing to their wider commitment to anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory practice. This can be demonstrated by tracking their pathways back through the chapter from their identification with the term ‘feminist’, through the (same) term which they chose to identify their practice with women, to the terms they used to indicate their stances in social work.

Feminist	>	Work with women	>	Social work
Candy	>	Feminist	>	ADP and AOP
Angela	>	Feminist	>	AOP

Figure 5.1 Pathways for ‘feminist’.

At the other end of the continuum of responses were four participants who did not identify themselves with the term ‘feminist’.

Not feminist	>	Practice with women	>	Social work
Helen	>	AOP	>	AOP
Gita	>	Gender	>	ADP and AOP
Liza	>	Women	>	AOP
Olive	>	Women	>	ADP and AOP

Figure 5.2 Pathways for ‘not feminist’.

Helen saw anti-oppressive practice as encompassing work with women and did not see the need to differentiate her work with women from her work with service users more generally. Despite also rejecting the term ‘feminist’, Liza, Gita and Olive do differentiate their stance in relation to work with women from their overall stance in social work, through identification with terms which refer to ‘women’ and ‘gender’.

In the middle of the continuum of responses, the bulk (14) of the participants can be seen as in some measure seeking to use feminism, or principles derived from it, albeit with varying degrees of commitment to the term ‘feminist’. In addition, for many of these participants ‘feminist’ is regarded with suspicion or reservation as a term of self-identification but has stronger support as a term, or as a set of principles, which has something to offer to their commitment to women, which exists in varying forms and to varying degrees, as part of their anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory stances in social work.

Feminist/ reservations	>	Practice with women	>	Social work
Denise	>	Women	>	AOP
Donna	>	Women	>	ADP and AOP
Elsie	>	Women	>	AOP
Iris	>	Gender	>	ADP
Theresa	>	Gender	>	ADP and AOP
Anita	>	Gender	>	ADP
Ruth	>	Gender	>	ADP and AOP
Gaye	>	Sexism	>	ADP
Amy	>	Sexism	>	AOP

Figure 5.3 Pathways for ‘feminist with reservations’.

Not feminist/ fem principles	>	Practice with women	>	Social work
Cindy	>	Gender	>	AOP
Janis	>	AOP	>	AOP
Linda	>	Women	>	ADP and AOP
Hilary	>	Gender	>	ADP and AOP
Zina	>	Gender	>	AOP

Figure 5.4 Pathways for ‘not feminist but use feminist principles’

To conclude: there is little evidence from the data obtained from the interviews with the participants in the present study of women social workers primarily aligning themselves with feminist identity, as suggested by the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature. The different identifications and stances which were revealed in this chapter, as the participants incorporated what they saw as ‘feminist’, suggest that ‘the feminist

dream of a common language' (Haraway quoted in Lennon and Whitford 1990: 215) was not being realised amongst these women social workers and, instead, 'a multiplicity of approaches, positions, and strategies' (Kemp and Squires 1997: 3) were in evidence. The data suggest that Langan's and Wise's formulations best capture the often partial ways in which women social workers drew on aspects of what is seen as 'feminist' in their wider (and overwhelmingly liberal) anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory stances. How these stances were translated into practice is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

Research questions:

- What are women social workers' experiences of forming egalitarian relationships with women service users?
- In what ways is the term 'empowerment' used by women social workers?

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presented women social workers' experiences of aligning themselves with feminist identity as being much less clearly defined in practice than in its depiction in the dominant paradigm of the feminist social work literature (see Chapter One). Although participants' responses indicated a range of alignments, the majority of those responses were more ambiguous and more ambivalent than the identification and stance conveyed by the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature. Having explored women social workers' experiences of feminist identity, in this chapter we begin by turning to their experiences of relationships with women service users. The feminist social work literature (see Chapter One) suggests that the shared experience of oppression between women social workers and women service users provides the basis for engaging in a more egalitarian form of social work. Wise (1995- see Chapter One) questions the feasibility of this approach in state social work and CCETSW emphasises the authority role of the social worker (see Chapter Three). Did participants experience their relationships with women service users as being rooted in an egalitarian ethos, as suggested by the feminist social work

literature? Further, did the women social workers see themselves as empowering women service users in the manner envisaged in the literature? Having considered women social workers' experiences of egalitarian relationships and empowerment, the chapter concludes by examining how women's interests were addressed in the particular settings within which the participants worked.

EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

With service users

The participants in the present research identified the possibility of some shared experience between service users, but were hesitant to stress this at the expense of overriding differences between service users:

'I think every woman's situation is going to be different and whatever those differences they need to be respected and taken account of and I think that is particularly true of carers, you know. Every carer that I've had, they need different opportunities maybe to have their own space or to get support. We can't assume that they're all oppressed in the same sort of way, but there will be certain aspects of their life experience where there will be some areas of commonality. There's no doubt about that' (Theresa);

'I've had women with post-natal depression in a group and they find it's not just them, other women feel very much the same. Although their individual problems are different, the feelings are similar' (Elsie).

When it came to women social workers' relationships with women service users, the majority of the participants moved from hesitancy to certainty and all but two of them maintained that egalitarian relationships were not possible:

'I don't think there can be equality between myself and service users. OK, we are both women, but that's as far as it goes' (Iris);

'I believe that it is impossible to have an equal relationship with service users. It would be unwise to instil a false sense of security or trust. If social workers evoke that to get families to do what they want, then it's bad practice. You must be honest about your role' (Amy);

'If you are meeting people you work with in a neutral setting and are not meeting them because of your job, then there could be some equality, but in a social work role, there is no equality whatsoever' (Linda).

Only two of the participants countenanced even the possibility of more egalitarian relationships with women service users. One of these participants was Denise, but she thought that the combination of the professional role she occupied and her sexuality made it difficult for her to realise her wish to work in a more egalitarian way:

'That stuff about we're all in this together because we have things in common. I try and work towards that to some extent, but it is difficult, partly because I am a lesbian and I have difficulty empathising with heterosexual women, and partly to do with my professional role. I don't think I'm that worked out in this area' (Denise).

Candy came closest to the position set out in the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature, as we will see when we move on to discuss empowerment later in the chapter.

With students

Given that the interviews with women social workers revealed that there was little material to draw on concerning the possibility of more egalitarian, woman-to-woman relationships with service users, I asked the participants about their work with student social workers in their role as practice teachers¹. Their responses have been placed in three groupings.

Wary of shared experience

In the first grouping, five participants were wary of assuming that shared experience was a basis from which to work with women students:

‘I don’t work from the standpoint of automatically having things in common with female² students. It’s just, you know, we’re going to be two people here with different experiences, some of which we can share, some of which I can guide and assist, but I don’t make that overall assumption that we have things in common. It varies with the students. I mean I’ve had male students who’ve been incredibly aware and sensitive

¹ My rationale was as follows: the power relationship and social distance between practice teachers and students was likely to be less than that between social workers and service users. If the lack of evidence of woman-to-woman egalitarian relationships with service users was carried through into woman-to-woman relationships with students that might serve to confirm, by implication, the difficulty of realising woman-to-woman relationships on an egalitarian footing with women service users.

² The use of the word ‘female’ by participants in the data used in this chapter may indicate their sense of distance at this point from students and later in the chapter from women service users who are sometimes referred to as simply ‘females’. (See the discussion in the Conclusion to the chapter.)

to women's issues and issues around women's discrimination and oppression particularly. Oh yes, some of them have produced some brilliant written work around it in cases, and are able to look at things. I mean I'd find it difficult to say they could look at it from a feminist perspective, but, they would take a feminist approach to analyse the whole situation' (Theresa).

What Theresa moves quickly on to stressing here is the role she occupies as a practice teacher and the way in which that role guides her responses to, and identifications with, women students. These participants took this as axiomatic and emphasised their role in teaching women students about oppression, rather than assuming a starting point in their shared experiences as women:

'I suppose I've learnt from looking at anti-racist practice that you can't assume that because someone is black that they have got racism sussed and similarly I can't assume that because someone is a woman that they have got woman-centredness, or whatever we want to call it, sussed because it will be about differential experiences and I will have to recognise that for some women they will have not have recognised - I find it difficult to believe that no woman has actually not experienced oppression - but they will certainly not have recognised the subtle ways in which they have been oppressed and I can't make those assumptions, so we have got to spend some time testing that out before we might have some common ground, some common understanding of the words that we're using. I think most students would say that with me placements are quite heavy because it is about unpacking a whole load of language and

not just making assumptions that because we use a word that we both experience that word in the same way, even if we're both women' (Linda).

At the same time, these participants were at pains to stress that teaching about oppression should not be didactic, with students needing to find their own way to understandings of their position in social work. A Black participant stated that she was 'careful not to make assumptions about the level of students' awareness in terms of race and gender issues', regardless of a student's gender or ethnic origin. She described herself as actively resisting identification with students, even when she might share experiences with them as Black women:

'It's actually trying to locate their strengths and trying to pull that out, build on that and actually trying to say to myself, well I might have been in that position once, but not actually using those words because its kind of dangerous, if I'm saying, "well, if I were you, this is what I would do", and I really don't ever want to say that, so I really avoid saying that. But at the same time, trying to get the message over that I understand where they are coming from and how hard it is, and that, in terms of the double jeopardy effect, and perhaps being a woman, and a Black woman, what that might mean, and the amount of internalised racism that you have actually got inside and how you can actually do some searching and perhaps get rid of some of that. So I think perhaps I give a lot more of personal resources within that kind of situation' (Olive).

Another Black participant went further than Olive and saw the assumption of shared experience on the part of Black women students as problematic:

‘I have perhaps run into more difficulties with Black students than I have ever with white students. There’s no reasons, no set reasons, why. This is just purely speculation on my part really. I guess when a white woman student comes, they see me as a Black practice teacher and they think, “yeah, we’ve got to get it right here”. Whereas a Black woman student, and maybe it’s unfair for me to say, but it certainly has come across in the interactions that’s gone on, thinks that it’s going to be an easy ride, it’s going to be Black-on-Black basically’ (Hilary).

Ann explained how her view on shared experience as the basis for more egalitarian relationships with women students had shifted, following difficulties she had encountered when she provided a placement for a particular student who, like her, was lesbian:

‘This was not an arranged match, just a fluke. I was delighted about it. This, I thought was a placement match made in heaven. Neither of us would face homophobia in our dealings with one another and we would be able to support one another’s choice about being visible and uncloseted. The student, though, had different ideas about it. She chose not to be out except to me, not even to colleagues in the same team room. This forced me into a conspiracy of silence that I found hard to deal with. I also had to deal with my own disappointment about it and there were some important lessons for me to learn about people not being here to live up to my expectations, and about me making presumptions. She also tried to get me to collude with her on the basis of our both being gay. For example she demanded the right to take her partner to work each

morning, even though this made her very late. I think she felt that as gay people we should stick by each other, a “we’re-both-in-this-together” kind of approach. The placement that should have been the match made in heaven turned out to be a bit hellish’ (Angela).

Shared experience as the basis for more egalitarian relationships

In the second grouping, three participants saw shared experiences with women students as the basis for relationships which were more egalitarian than those they had with men students:

‘I do feel that the women students and I understand each other on a different level, because we are both women. Much easier, much better, than men’ (Denise); ‘I’m starting with, in my mind, the possibility of oppressions on her and on me, at a personal level. Then as a case study, or piece of intervention comes up, then I’d be looking at that particular case. My experience with female students is in many respects very different because we are both women. It feels very easy to enable a female student to draw on her own experiences as a woman in order to empathise with clients and help them understand society’s pressures and expectations’ (Gaye); ‘When I had a female student, it was just so much easier because there was so much that I assumed she already knew just because we were both women. If the student is a woman, I would start from a different perspective, maybe still about mental health, but I would talk to her as one woman to another woman, and talk to her about a woman’s perception of the world, so that she could maybe link it into her

own experiences and perception of her position in the world, in life’ (Elsie).

Difficulties with men

The final grouping brings together examples of responses from participants who mentioned difficulties in working with men students. These difficulties were experienced in a number of ways. First, there was difficulty in students reaching views of women service users’ problems which were seen as acceptable by the participants in their role as practice teachers:

‘It was only after having a female student that I realised how much harder I had had to work to share my perception of clients’ difficulties with male students, and enable them to formulate a model of work, particularly when the client was also male’ (Elsie).

Second, men students were seen as problematic in terms of their intervention with service users. For example, Linda described a man student who responded to women and men service users in the same way, whereas her expectation was that his responses would be differentiated according to the gender of the service user:

‘In looking at the strategies that he employed it became clear that he utilised exactly the same strategy whether he was working with a male or female client, and initially could not identify any reason why that had produced very different outcomes. It was some time before he was able to identify that a root cause might be the gender considerations. My own frustration at him not being able to see this further impacted on the

process, and we needed to take time out to explore his perceptions of me.

At this time he stated that he perceived me as an aggressive female' (Linda).

Third, the participants had experienced a reluctance by men students to engage with the impact of sexism:

'I've had two male students. The last one I found a bit difficult to deal with. I wanted to start by talking with him about sexism in general and how he might be wording things differently to me or to a female client, and no matter what I said, it didn't really seem to strike a chord with him in the way I'd hoped it would and sometimes he'd be a little bit uneasy when I began to talk about sexism. It was hard really. He didn't really want to look at these areas. I think he wanted to in principle, but not really in practice. He was a bit uneasy. So, I found it very hard to make progress in addressing this. I didn't want to make him feel bad or uncomfortable. I wanted to approach the subject in a positive way. I did really want him to understand that there was a difference between opportunities available to him and opportunities available to a woman, in principle' (Gaye).

Fourth, participants pointed to the lack of comprehension of men students in relation to women's experiences:

'It is difficult, because some men, some male students, they appear not to understand what it is to be a female, or how we feel, or where we're coming from. He could not see why I was saying certain things about this female or this is how I really want you to do it. I found that bit difficult.

Everybody comes from a different stance. You have to pick up quite clearly what level you've got to work with' (Zina).

Fifth, this led one participant to see men students as needing support:

'I think I come from a team, this is awful to say this perhaps, but, our experiences of male students aren't particularly good. I wouldn't say negative, but they generally don't score as high as female student practitioners. You know, what we say is that they always sort of think with their dick, really, sometimes. They, I mean we have male students who will say, "well, I think this is a male perspective on this", and it goes down like a lead balloon really. So, not to say that males get a raw deal of it as such, but I think in some ways they have to prove themselves a little harder, and that's in the team. On a personal basis, I have, over the years this is now, this isn't recent stuff, I'm talking about ever since I've been a practice teacher, I have probably had to stick up more for a male student than I have for a female student' (Helen).

Thus, some of the participants who were sceptical about shared experience with women students as the basis for more egalitarian relationships, nevertheless identified particular difficulties in working with men which might suggest that there is a different, but unacknowledged, basis to their work with women students, albeit not extending as far as egalitarian relationships.

Overall comment

The majority of the participants saw no possibility for the use of shared experience in egalitarian relationships with women service users or for that

matter in relationships with women students. Whilst needing to be cautious about inferring too much from the discussion of women social workers' experiences as practice teachers, it might be indicative of the even greater difficulties they would encounter in seeking egalitarian relationships with women service users. However, for the participants, there was a sense that working with women students is different to working with men, even though most of them do not see that sense of gender difference as leading towards egalitarian relationships with women students. Given their greater social distance from, and the stronger power relationship they have with, women service users, we can cautiously conclude that it is difficult to visualise the participants being able to construct relationships with women service users which are more egalitarian than their relationships with women social work students, but there may be unacknowledged dimensions of shared experience with women service users which fall short of egalitarian relationships, in the same way that there are with women students.

EMPOWERMENT

In Chapter One we saw that the feminist social work literature stressed that the goal of feminist practice was the empowerment of women service users. What were these women social workers' experiences of empowerment with women service users?

'Empowerment' was used by most of the participants to describe their approach to work with women service users. For Candy (one of only two of the participants in the study who described herself as 'feminist', see Chapter Five)

‘empowerment’ captured the essence of applying feminism to her work with women service users:

‘In terms of being aware of issues around women and trying to empower women in their lives, that's how I would see myself as a feminist. To raise their self-esteem, to raise their confidence, to enable them to make decisions for themselves. To feel they are able to make the decisions. To not feel as though they have to submit to another person's opinion. That they can be assertive and articulate in their, their lives. That's how I would see people, people feeling differently about themselves, people feeling that they have power to do something about their own lives, and by working with them, you know, specific tasks maybe that they have to do’ (Candy).

Although, as mentioned earlier, Candy comes closest to the sentiments concerning the goal of empowerment in the dominant paradigm of the feminist social work literature, she slips into talking about an approach which might be used in a similar way with any service user. This is indicated by the way in which she begins by referring to ‘women’ and moves on to talking about ‘people’. In terms of how this approach to people, which includes women, plays out, it consists of being alongside the woman service user and working with her against those who are trying to prevent her having a voice. However, there is no recognition of the woman service user needing to be empowered in the power relationship vis-à-vis women social workers.

This shades into the majority view which was of the woman social worker enabling service users, in general and regardless of their gender, to participate in aspects of the work taking place with them:

‘Empowering services users to participate fully in events, in reviews, that sort of thing, is important to try and alleviate oppression. Can we empower or enable clients? Where are you going to get the most effective change?’ (Theresa).

This approach suggests two important points. First, it is a view of empowerment as participation in social work processes. Second, it is a general principle of participation which is applied to women’s participation in social work, as it is to other service users. In this approach of empowerment-as-participation, the category ‘woman’ is no more or less significant than other categories:

‘I like to look at age and empowerment in relation to the vulnerability of the older person and issues around empowerment like shared responsibility’ (Gita).

This all-embracing, fairly elastic concept of empowerment-as-participation allows the term to be used in very restrictive circumstances, such as ‘empowering’ a young person who had absconded:

‘We planned to empower a person in a powerless situation and to expand their choice to a maximum in a situation where choices appear to be restricted’ (Gaye).

This application of a general and ungendered principle of empowerment to women service users was apparent as Hilary talked about discussing anti-oppressive practice with a student in relation to work with a single parent:

‘In every case with a student, we actually look at what the main issues are, why are they there for that particular person. Are they a single parent family? Is it any wonder single parents have these difficulties, these problems? They are already oppressed by society. We have to consider what we can do as an individual worker to try and alleviate this oppression. Do we actually empower clients? Do we enable clients to make changes? What can we do to get the most effective changes’ (Helen).

Another aspect of empowerment which was put forward was the way in which a sense of having things in common with other women could validate personal experiences. Elsie described using a book in groupwork with women with depression:

‘I don’t think I’ve had a women who said she couldn’t read it and who couldn’t actually see something of herself in the book. It’s so empowering when they see that somebody has written down the sorts of things they’ve been thinking and feeling. It validates it so much. It is very empowering’.

The implication is that recognition of having experiences in common with other women depathologises service users’ involvement with mental health services, at least to some extent.

Thus, empowerment in relation to women is seen as a component in a wider commitment to participation by service users and is a fairly elastic concept. Only two of the participants questioned the elasticity of the term empowerment: ‘Empowerment is a word that drives me crazy because students talk about it all the time, without saying what it means

or how they did it. I think if you asked any of the social workers in these two teams, in the two children's teams here, what empowerment meant, they would see that as working with service users or asking the opinions of service users' (Liza).

One of the participants related a discussion she had had with a student in supervision, after the student had said she was taking a feminist perspective in relation to a single woman carer and had given this as an example of feminism as empowering practice:

'When we're talking about empowerment, we are actually talking about anti-discriminatory practice really, aren't we, so, you know, if you're looking at women-centred perspectives, looking at how they are working with a single parent who is living in poverty, inadequate housing and got six kids, and they're telling me they're taking a feminist perspective and they're doing this and doing that, and I'm saying, well, okay, what does that actually mean then, for that woman, the fact that you are actually taking on this perspective? What does this mean for this woman? And you said to me that this is the conversation that you've had with her, how do you think this has left her feeling? So it's actually trying to get them to almost put themselves in the position of the service user, and get an idea of how they might feel, and get them to think through, well, what is this theory about and does it really empower this person? Are you really trying to give this person some choices? And how are you trying to give this person back some control?' (Olive).

In addition, this quotation illustrates a view of empowerment as the women social work student giving the woman service user ‘some control’ back over her life and in the process indicates where power lies in the relationship.

These examples, drawn from participants’ experiences, suggest a view of empowerment which consists of women service users participating in decisions in ways which validate their experiences. As such, empowerment appears to a general principle which is applied, or in some cases fine-tuned, in relation to women service users, with little consideration of the power present in state social work (see Chapter Two). That power is there by implication but attracts little direct consideration. This suggests that the participants’ understanding and use of ‘empowerment’ is part of the mainstream approach to state social work which developed across the 1990s (see Chapters Two and Three), an approach most clearly reflected in the concept of partnership.

Partnership

The above interpretation seems to be borne out by participants who referred to partnership in relation to empowerment:

‘I’ve looked at ways of making the assessment a shared document, so again, that’s around issues of partnership and shared responsibility’
(Gita);

‘I aim to maintain respect for service users and work towards client self-determination, working in partnership with young people and their carers’
(Ruth); ‘You design your own programme, in partnership with parents, looking at the needs of the young person, and we work with the Criminal

Justice Act and the Children Act, so we're very conscious of the need to work in partnership with the young person' (Helen);

'I like care management. I actually find I can use it to the client's advantage, and I much prefer the idea that the client's rights to see what is written about them are enshrined and it is not an optional extra anymore. I do feel that they are more likely to be partners in the assessment process' (Angela).

Whilst empowerment, in the main, was discussed uncritically as a way of representing participants' stance towards working with service users, partnership attracted more critical reflections. For example, one participant saw it as ignoring the extent to which state social work is embedded in the social divisions of the wider society:

'Much of the work within a statutory agency is based on the values, laws and judgements of white, middle-class Britain. In direct contradiction to this the majority of the service users have neither the privileges or the experiences of that group of society' (Ruth).

Partnership was seen as problematic in relation to the statutory-based interventions employed by social workers:

'I mean, there's this notion of partnership, and I know that we are all equal, but some are more equal than others. I mean partnership is quite often forced, for things like child care and child protection' (Iris);

'I don't think we've still sorted out partnership with parents, you know. Social workers don't look at power relationships and you can't say to someone, "we're going to do this aren't we", and that be a partnership, you

know. I mean I argue with people now who when we talk about you know referrals to associations like alcohol and drug advisory, you know, we work in partnership with service users. We don't, you know. If we've got a young parent here who is using drugs or alcohol we send them there. They have no choice in that. If they wish to keep their children, they go. So the partnership process is "do I do as they say, or do I lose my child?" (Liza).

Whilst sharing information with service users was seen as an example of partnership of which the participants approved, this faced real difficulties with some service users, which they felt were not recognised by employing Departments:

'It's meant to be about partnership. Having said that, I like to be flexible in the way I use assessments. Like you must share your community care assessment with the client, but then with clients with dementia, you can share it with them, you can try and share it with them. Their concentration span is usually about half a minute. I may be discriminatory in saying this but I think in some ways it's a waste of time, as long as you've told them what's going on, you've explained it to them as best you can, the fact that, that whether they should actually read the report you've written, I don't think is relevant. If they've got relatives caring, I like them to read the report so that they are aware of what's going on. So, I wouldn't want to follow everything to the letter. I like to be able to tailor it' (Gita).

Overall comment

Chapter Five showed that the majority of the participants had some degree of attachment to a feminist stance or saw themselves as influenced by feminist principles, even though their responses were marked by ambiguity and ambivalence. As we saw earlier, this did not lead them to advocate egalitarian relationships. When discussing their work, participants overwhelmingly dismissed the possibility of egalitarian relationships with women service users. At first sight, having rejected egalitarian relationships, their support for empowerment is puzzling. However, the term 'empowerment' was used in a more limited sense than is the case in the feminist social work literature. In the main, women social workers used 'empowerment' as a synonym for participation and its use evoked little critical reflection. Partnership was seen as an expression of empowerment, but was seen as more problematic. Perhaps this is because empowerment is seen as a principle devoid of specific practice content. It is a principle concerned with the conduct of the process of social work on the part of the individual woman social worker. Whilst partnership is also focused on the process of social work, there are explicit expectations of the social work mechanisms through which partnership with service users will be pursued, for example, assessments and case conferences, and there are concrete outcomes to be achieved through the use of those mechanisms, again in partnership with service users. We can return to Derber's distinction between ends and means (see Chapter Two) to make sense of this: when the legislative ends of state social work were brought into the picture, and were being pursued by means of partnership through mechanisms established by the state, the constraints of state

social work began to break through into the experiences of the participants. Thus, dilemmas and constraints emerged when the participants discussed their experiences of working in specific settings.

WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN SPECIFIC SETTINGS

So far in this chapter, we have examined women social workers' experiences in relation to egalitarian relationships and empowerment. We saw in Chapter One that feminist perspectives have been employed to open up analysis of specific areas of practice and some of the responses of participants in Chapter Five referred to drawing on feminist understandings of particular areas of social work. Seven of the participants in the study were based in community care settings and twelve in child care settings, with one person having a generic role because of the specialised nature of her job as an out-of hours-duty social worker (see Chapter Four). We now turn to consider the women social workers' experiences in these settings and how work in their particular settings addressed the interests of women. This demarcation into specific settings reflects the changes which occurred in social work from the late 1980s and through the 1990s.(see Chapter Two).

Community Care

When the seven participants working in community care settings referred to work which addressed the interests of women, they focused, in the main, on informal carers with, in addition, one participant raising assessment work and

two commenting on women's experiences in relation to using mental health services.

One of the participants regarded some informal carers as having a psychological need to remain in the caring role:

'Well there will always be a fair number of cases where you've got women looking after people, who maybe haven't chosen that, but it's happened to them, and they've got a pattern of looking after one person. Then they die or whatever and then they latch onto another person. They don't know how to rebuild their life without being in a caring role' (Amy).

In contrast, the others thought that it was important to counter the assumption that women would be the informal carers:

'When you're working with carers, well, you know, the majority of carers are female. Obviously as a team I think we try, and as individual workers, we try not to make sort of assumptions about the gender of carers, try not to assume that women should be the carers' (Candy).

Gita thought that countering this assumption involved confronting men, when this became necessary:

'Perhaps in society more than in social services there's this feeling that if a husband is going back to his wife, there's less questioning about whether she can cope than if it was a wife going back to her husband. Perhaps, not through prejudice, but through knowing that in the majority of households the wife has traditionally done all the work, so you do need to ask if the husbands can do it, are prepared to do it, and that sort of thing'.

[Q: What if men say they are not prepared to do it?]

‘You've got to take care of your client, so you can go out and read the riot act. It's very difficult. I think I'd put a carer in, a female carer, if he wasn't prepared to it after that, because you can't force anybody to do anything. You've got to look for ways round it. Someone standing their ground categorically, saying they're not going to do anything, I've never had that situation’(Gita).

Theresa emphasised the need to avoid falling into negative portrayals of carers, when discussing the work of a student on placement with her:

‘Caring situations pose a clear issue around gender expectations. Quite recently we had a case, an older woman, who had moved to this area, moved only because, after her husband died, the family felt that she would be better off moving to this area, to be closer to them. It seemed reasonable but I think maybe they hadn't explored how she felt about it very much, so when she came up here, she seemed to fall into some sort of depression, wasn't well motivated to do all the things that she used to do, and the student's involvement at that stage was a response from the carer to say what can we actually do to help my mother? because she doesn't seem to be functioning very well, and she's got arthritis, she's not getting out very much and the issue for the carer at that time was ill-health of the older person. What can you do about it? She needs day care, needs this, that and the other. Quite clearly, as the student started to learn, the issues were more complex than that. It was about loss, loss of partner, loss of identity because she had moved from an area to somewhere

completely new. She wasn't seeing as much of the family as they had led her to believe she would, so there were all those kinds of issues that needed to be looked at. But then, from the carer's perspective, seeing the decline in her mother's health was putting pressure on her, on the carer, and when we first became involved, the student's response was, what an unpleasant woman this carer is because she was making all these demands on us, you know, when she should be doing them sort of thing. So obviously to me there was a big issue there about gender expectations, which we had to unravel and it got quite tense between this student and myself, trying to unravel that. Because what I sensed was, I wouldn't call it an intuitive response, but a hasty response, a judgement that was made, that to me indicated a value base that needed sorting out. So we had to do quite a lot of work on that and I suppose for me, one of the first indications, a bit of a concern about value base expectations, making assumptions, that needed sorting out. So that, it obviously was a gender issue' (Theresa).

Only one participant talked specifically about women service users' interests, as against carers' interests, as part of the assessment process:

'I think if you were assessing a couple, for example, then you would look at any gender issues between that couple and assessing the woman as being oppressed and therefore your work would be sort of try and sort of re-adjust that balance, to empower that woman within that relationship. So I think issues of gender come into that' (Candy).

Two participants discussed the high referral rates of women to mental health services, which they considered were a reflection of women's position in society:

‘Well, there is a great deal of poor female mental health which is directly attributable to women's position in society and their specific individual position in the culture, the family, that they live in and that is so, it is sort of endemic, and it doesn't, it's worse if you live in the lower classes because of the poor housing, because of the poverty, because life is that much harder, but interesting it's still there in quite upper middle classes, where they've got more choices because they've got more money and they've had more education, but still you quite often find women are there and sometimes maybe even because the husband or whatever is in business and therefore he's been you know, quite ruthless and you know, getting up the ambition ladder and all the rest of it, and he tends to be very oppressive towards his wife, in spite of the fact that they've both had more education and opportunity because they're better off’ (Elsie).

Gaye expressed concern about women being compulsorily admitted to psychiatric hospitals, particularly Black women:

‘I have to attend to people at the police stations, so, I've very often talked about the position of women who are detained at the police stations under the Mental Health Act. I always talk about the possibility and usually the presence of sexist attitudes by the police. I thought, we could look at ethnic monitoring on assessments and that led into looking at the authority-wide monitoring which showed that women are more likely to

be sectioned and that Black women are more likely to be sectioned as well basically’.

Child Care

For the participants working in child care settings, addressing women’s interests centred first on the majority of service users being women. They thought that all of the work they undertook was addressing women’s interests, because the majority of the people with whom they worked were women:

‘I think gender seems to run as a common vein throughout all the work, if you look at it. I mean, if you look at the number of, I mean we will look at in supervision with students, you could look at the number of women. Look at duty for example, in a typical week or in a typical day, who has the most interaction? You will find it will be a female’ (Hilary);

‘99% of social work, it is with the mothers who come, which I think is very oppressive and it is very hard to break that because fathers, some quite often come to first interviews, but then leave it to mum because he's working. So we do a lot of discussion around how we can work against that and how we try not to create situations which are as oppressive as whatever is going on outside which is causing the problem in the first place’ (Janis);

‘Again, in child protection work, the bulk of it is with females. It is actually done with females’ (Liza);

Having identified that the majority of the service users were women, and concluded, ipso facto, that their work addressed women's interests³, a significant dimension which was seen as impacting on women's interests was the contribution, or lack of it, to child care from men:

'I like to think that I'm reasonably vigilant about issues around making sure that fathers are seen as equally responsible and that as far as possible social workers make the effort to connect with the fathers as well as the mothers in the families and don't collude with sexist ideas and expectations. I am sure this is not as rigorous as it should be' (Anita);

'You know, the majority of single families are female families, and yet we would draw a distinction within supervision when we would actually have the odd referral of the male single parent family and we treat them differently. Do we treat them differently?, you know, I think we do. Like, for example, child minding. If a female carer wants to go out to work, then it's her responsibility to arrange her child care arrangements. Yet if a male walks through our door, it's almost like, they won't be able to function properly with children, and so, there's more onus I feel in the use of Section 17 to provide that support. So I think we do stereotype, we run into those pitfalls really, time and time again' (Hilary).

Reference to the pitfalls of stereotyping were highlighted in relation to expectations about women caring:

³ This provides empirical support for the position mentioned in Chapter One, namely that 'the assumption is that gender issues are addressed by virtue of the presence of a predominantly female work-force and clientele' (Dominelli 1991:183).

‘A lot of the difficulties this particular client faces are to do with poverty and being a woman in a society which expects women to care, but provides no support. Women’s identity and self esteem is tied up with her own and others’ perspectives of how caring she is as a woman’ (Anita);

‘I was dealing with a case where the mother had left her four children with her partner, who was having difficulty coping. It was very easy for me as a worker assessing the possibility of the children being rehabilitated to the mother, when she eventually requested it, to focus on her not having fulfilled her maternal role. A colleague within the team, who was doing a course in Women’s Studies, was able to highlight for me the tendency to feed into gender stereotypes. It seemed to me then that society was more tolerant of men abdicating their parenting responsibilities. One could say that it was not a deliberate or a conscious oppressive practice, but it made me aware of the potential for female workers to be sexist’ (Donna).

Another area related to women and their role as carers was fostering. Cindy’s view was that although she would not agree that women should automatically take on this role, it was hard to work against organisational policies and practices:

‘I think the whole thinking, the whole issue within fostering, there are so many things that are, you know, originally it was seen as a female, something that females would do and the way, how do we make sure that we don’t discriminate, and I guess make assumptions about women within a fostering role, it’s quite important, and the way that we can

access more males, getting them more involved in caring, so I think it does come up. I hate to say that perhaps its a lower priority within the department at the moment, just because of time, and how do we, how do we get more male carers on board?’ (Cindy).

In the field of youth justice, Helen thought that how women young offenders were viewed by the courts was problematic:

‘There’s a lot of gender issues, for instance, how people are treated in court, and sometimes, you get a problem where the magistrates view a young woman in a certain way because of her lifestyle, which wouldn't happen with a young man and it can work either way for them and sometimes, it sounds awful again, but if they go in a short skirt and they are very attractive and they flutter their eyelashes at the male magistrates they can get a better sentence. You know appearances are really important in court. It sounds dreadful, but its true’ (Helen).

Overall comment

In both community care and child care settings the women social workers focused overwhelmingly on women as carers in discussing the points at which women’s interests were addressed in their practice, rather than, for example, also highlighting to the same extent how the interests of women with disabilities, older women, girls and young women might be addressed. Although women social workers saw themselves as addressing the interests of women, they were also conscious of the potential for reinforcing the stereotypical roles assigned to women as carers through social work.

CONCLUSION

We can now review the research questions posed at the outset of the chapter.

- What are women social workers' experiences of forming egalitarian relationships with women service users?

In the sense conveyed by the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature, there is little evidence from the data of the existence of egalitarian relationships between women social workers and women service users. There appears to be a level of unacknowledged shared experience which falls short of the possibility of egalitarian relationships but there is also a tendency for participants to refer to women service users as 'females'. Given that 'female' is not used very much by women as a synonym for 'woman' in everyday life, it may indicate the sense of distance which these women social workers experienced in relation to women service users, as a result of their position in state social work. This may also explain why a certain amount of shared experience with women, as implied by difficulties experienced with men, seemed to go unacknowledged.

- In what ways is the term 'empowerment' used by women social workers?

There was strong support for 'empowerment' amongst the participants. It was used in a loose way to refer to encouraging service users' participation in social work. The support for empowerment may have been sustained by its malleability in terms of support for an abstract principle. This seems to be suggested by the contrast of 'empowerment' with 'partnership'. Although seen as an expression

of empowerment, partnership was seen as more problematic. Perhaps the explicit expectations and anticipated outcomes of the latter lead women social workers away from abstract principle and back into the dilemmas and constraints of state social work, some of which emerged when the participants discussed their experiences of working in specific settings.

Having considered feminist identity, egalitarian relationships and empowerment, the next chapter moves on to the remaining items on the research agenda in considering women social workers' experiences of managerialism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MANAGERIALISM

Research questions:

- Following the introduction of managerialism, what do women social workers identify as the current features of state social work organisations and what are their experiences of the impact of these features on their practice?
- How do women social workers regard their involvement/potential involvement in managerialism?

INTRODUCTION

After discussing the defining characteristics of state social work, Chapter Two charted the development of managerialism in Social Services Departments as representing the field of possibilities within which women's interests have to be addressed. This chapter examines the participants' experiences of the features of these managerial developments and their responses to them. It begins with accounts of their positive and negative experiences of managerialism, before turning to forms of accommodation in which participants engaged and the possibility of challenging managerialism. Finally, consideration is given to the position of women social workers vis-à-vis management.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF MANAGERIALISM

Eleven of the women social workers spoke favourably about aspects of tighter managerial control over practice following the implementation of the Children Act 1989 and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. Those from community care settings thought that the system introduced by the

implementation of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 encouraged and enabled social workers to include service users in the assessment and report writing process. This was seen as reinforcing good social work practice, defined by what they saw as empowerment (see Chapter Six). These participants regarded the participation of service users as an important gain which encouraged more openness and accountability:

‘I like care management, and, although a lot of people say, “well we find our hands tied, it's so reductionist, it's so this, it's so that”, I actually find that I can use it to clients’ advantage, and I much prefer the idea that the client's rights to see what's written about them are enshrined and it's not an optional extra anymore, that I do feel that they are more likely to be partners in the assessment process’ (Angela).

The standardisation brought about by managerialism was seen as resulting in more equitable treatment of services users:

‘There is some standardisation, but in some ways that isn't a bad thing, because everybody [service users] gets a fair crack at it I think. And so I'm pretty optimistic and positive about care management. I feel if I was out there on a patch now [-she's a Team Manager-], I would still work the same as I did before. I would use the policies and procedures for my use, the clients’ use. I don't think there's any need to see it as stifling’ (Amy).

Clear procedures were seen as clarifying what had to be done in social work:

‘I actually came in [to social work] as a trainee child care officer. I did a year's training as a child care officer and then they implemented the Seebohm Report. I left to have my children at this point and when I came

back we were expected to do older people and everything. I don't think I ever really got over that period. In child care, we had no procedures, it was incredibly hit-and-miss. I was taken out by a senior and helped to sort of snatch some children away from somebody once. It was awful, very oppressive. When I came back [into social work] and found that there were procedures, you know, when I had a suspected child abuse come in, and there was a manual with a list of things, a checklist of things you should know, it was so reassuring that there was something there that I could use, you know, to back me up. With regards to the older people, adults, that I now work with, I started pre-Community Care Act, quite early on, the access to records, that legislation came in so we had all this stuff on how to record things and the fact that people would go to see a file. I think that made you tighten up on your recording, make you think about what you were writing down. And I think that was anti-oppressive. I think its good and its right to have the guidelines that we have'(Gita).

The women social workers who were positive about the changes which had taken place, and who worked in child care settings, approved of the Children Act 1989 and subsequent central and local government procedures and guidelines. Before the introduction of the Act, some aspects of practice were seen as haphazard:

'It has definitely changed in the way we work, there are lots of things in the Children Act now we have to follow. Prior to the Children Act it was really haphazard practice I think. The Children Act provides clear guidance, a clear way of moving forward' (Zina).

The reform of child care policy had moved social workers' practice in the direction of firmer boundaries and more accountability for their practice:

'I certainly think there was a change for the better, with the Children Act. I think that, that it's made a really big impact on how we actually work. When I look back at practices like Place of Safety Orders, I mean they were like two-a-penny. I could have done one blindfolded, and when you look at the practices, it really makes you sort of, you know, fall over really, because you could take a Place of Safety and a parent wouldn't see their child for 28 days. And really that's not on. So, we are much more accountable for our practice these days, you know. I mean orders, a removal of a child must be the last recourse. So we're working within much firmer boundaries' (Hilary).

Tighter time-scales were seen as a positive development:

'I mean it's been a mixed reaction I think from social workers, where some people feel like it's the best thing that's ever happened, that they like the clear guidelines and being told what they've got to do and when they've got to do it and giving very strict timings on things. I think the time limits are fine' (Liza).

Finally, some of the participants from child care settings identified more flexibility in resource usage than had been the case before the reforms which followed the Children Act 1989:

'Section 17 now, which was previously Section 1, actually does allow for a bit of flexibility, because Section 1 was purely about preventing children coming into care. Well, Section 17 isn't. I mean that's about

children in need, so need can be defined overall really, and it's interesting every time I sign all these resource forms for all the practitioners, it's normally for those children who are actually very low at risk. So we are helping significantly, financially, in those terms, for those low levels of need. But whereas I would have thought, when it came out, we'd be so bound financially to help those high at risk under Section 17, but that's not in fact true' (Hilary).

Overall comment

The women social workers identified the positive features of managerialism as being clear procedures, which provided tighter boundaries for their work, involving a more standardised approach (and hence they argued a more equitable approach) to practice. They also welcomed the encouragement of service user participation and stressed the importance of social workers' accountability. Their welcome for these aspects of managerialism can be seen as a commitment to what they regard as good practice, together with an appreciation of greater predictability in their work because they know where they are and what they are supposed to do. Although they present managerialism and good practice as operating in tandem, presumably there is the potential for them to be on a collision course at times. For example, a particular course of action might seem to make sense and might have the support of a service user, but might be precluded by the more standardised, managerial approach which they welcomed for the reasons already cited. Thus the trade-off may be that whilst there may be more protection for services users against the arbitrary exercise of social

workers' discretion, there may also be less chance of an individually-attuned response:

'It has to be placed within the context of working within this agency, in a statutory context, and you know, no matter how strongly you feel about a particular aspect of your work, or how strong your value base is, at the end of the day you are working within this agency where you may find that your value bases have no use at all, because you are going to have to do something completely different. And that could be something as simple as a particular service provision, which you feel is desperately needed, but because of, I don't know, criteria or priorities, within the agency, you're not going to be able to provide it' (Theresa).

Weighed against this is the identification by some child care social workers of greater flexibility in the use of resources.

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES OF MANAGERIALISM

The participants in the study identified six aspects of the impact of managerialism on their work as negative: increased involvement in financial aspects, shortage of resources, having to remain within 'core business', the closing down of practice possibilities, computerisation and loss of discretion. Each of these aspects is considered in turn.

Financial aspects

The women social workers who worked in community care settings did not like having to elicit financial details from service-users for the purpose of means-testing their eligibility for services:

‘I suppose we are having a lot more input into finances which we never used to have. A lot of social workers feel that it’s an intrusion on people’s privacy, that we shouldn’t be expected to handle this’ (Theresa).

Shortage of resources

The community care participants were also struggling with constraints imposed by limited resources which they saw as undermining the stated policy goals which were meant to be achieved by the community care reforms:

‘I think the real hang up now is just about resources and you know, anything outside of the resources forum is seen as almost irrelevant anymore. It just feels that, you know, you’re so busy fighting for what you can actually get in respect of services’ (Ruth).

This was seen as having resulted in the disappearance of the flexible approach to services which was meant to be the hallmark of community care:

‘What’s stifling is that there's no money, so we can't actually give people a flexible care package to meet the needs that we've assessed’ (Liza);

‘When you're doing your assessments, there’s a particular service that's needed and is just not available because there isn't any money, or whatever the reason is’ (Amy).

Restrictions on particular resources were sometimes experienced as happening in an arbitrary manner:

‘I mean, when I was at [‘X’] Road, they suddenly decided that the Department would no longer supply bath aids to the majority of the population. Well, with older people that's one of the first things that they

actually need, so when you were on duty you would get two or three times a day, somebody ringing up, I can't get into the bath, please can you help me get into the bath and you have to say, sorry, no. We can give you an assessment. If you've got one of these conditions then we can help you, you know, and all that, so you were restricted in that sense' (Gita).

The pressure was perceived in terms of prioritising the need to divert older people from residential care, with other services suffering as a result:

'Money is limited, certainly for young people with disabilities, trying to get the home adapted, that is a major financial hurdle or financing respite for a lone parent, who is just struggling really, just needs sometime to themselves, to be an adult for a couple of hours a week' (Ruth).

For some of the participants, stretched material resources pointed to the need for social workers to draw on their internal resources:

'I mean, I think we are, we are increasingly in a situation where you can get hung up on the fact that there aren't the resources to do things, and it would be very easy to curl up in a little ball and say you know, well I can't do it, there's no money to do it. But I think it actually, its really important that we don't actually allow that to happen and that we do find alternative ways of accessing resources and that may mean actually accessing resources within us' (Linda).

Other participants thought that the new managerial processes simply threw into sharp relief what had been long-standing issues in social work:

'It just seems as though it's become a more streamlined process now, the access to resources, so that when you can't get everything you want. It

feels to the individual social worker, that its like the end of the world but it always used to be like that anyway. It's just the process that's different' (Theresa)¹.

Core business

We saw in Chapter Two that one of the ways in which managerialism impacted on public sector organisations was with regard to 'core business'. This involved setting clear primary goals and shedding activities which did not contribute to their achievement. The participants talked, unprompted, about 'core business' in their Departments and what core business comprised. However, they suggested that whilst managerial definitions of 'core business' might now have more influence in deciding the services which users received, once allocated to work with a service user the social worker still enjoyed a measure of discretion in how the work was carried out:

'I think, you can obviously only work with people where the referral is sort of core business, where, you know, at the moment it's sort of fairly urgent referrals, but when you are actually given a piece of work, then you still have quite a lot of scope as to how you carry out that work, and I guess in those ways you can work towards empowering, you know, the family members, the service user themselves' (Candy).

If we refer back to Derber's work on ends and means (see Chapter Two), this view of discretion seems to be about the means of working with individual service users in terms of the social worker's discretion in the conduct of the

¹ Of course, a key aspect of the difference in the process is social workers' more direct involvement in rationing resources than was the case previously (see Chapter Two).

relationship, hence the emphasis on 'empowerment' (and see Chapter Six. Discretion will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.)

Some participants went to great lengths to define the work which constituted core business in relation to their Departments' priority levels. These accounts gave glimpses of how women social workers are involved day-to-day in calculating priorities, rejecting work and, in the process, controlling the allocation of resources:

'Well we've had to tighten up. We used to cover three levels, priority 1, 2 and 3. Priority 1 is to do with needing support your whole life, activities, that sort of thing. Priority 2 is needing quite a lot of support. Priority 3 is needing a minimal amount, so like priority 3 would be a straightforward home care referral, or benefits, wanting benefits advice, possibly housing, that sort of thing. We're not supposed to get involved with priority 3s. So what we have to do is go back to the ward staff and tell them to either direct the referral to the local Social Services office for home care or to CAB for benefits. Now, we are also acting as liaison workers with particular wards, and so sometimes the staff on the ward would ask us general questions about a client they weren't quite sure about and it would perhaps help if we saw them and just sort of clarified things. But, at the moment, we've got so much work coming in that we're supposed to bring all the referrals back here and then ['X'] prioritises them, so, we're a bit restricted, I'm very reluctant to go in to talk to anybody because you often start something off, that you can't really finish. So I feel restricted in that sense, but you can't just say to the nurses, "oh,

I'll have a word", I find I'm saying to them, would you go and talk to them again and make sure whether its going to be for us and if it's not for us then can you deflect it somewhere else' (Gita).

Despite the influence exercised by 'core business', it would be incorrect to present it as being fixed and never negotiable. Some participants suggested that teams can develop norms which bend the commitment to core business on occasions:

'Well, you see here, I would say the manager is a core business manager but he also accepts that there are times when you need flexibility with a case, but it's a question of just convincing him, that the work is really required, and that's all it takes, because he's accepted that he's not going to prevent people from doing what they really think is social work. But I suppose it makes it easier if people just go along the core business route. It's easier to manage, isn't it? He is the sort of person who likes to keep a tight rein on everything, and he'd be the first to admit it. But you only need to approach him to get it sorted. So, maybe there is a team culture that would make it easier or more difficult to work round core business' (Theresa)².

Closing down practice possibilities

Despite a degree of negotiability in some teams, as a result of managerial control being exerted over what constituted core business, working methods regarded by the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature as compatible with

² This comment is consistent with the finding in another study of the varying extent to which managerial agendas had been incorporated into different teams (Ellis et al 1999).

feminist practice (see Chapter One) were seen by participants as having little prospect of being realised. Three forms of social work were mentioned as either having been marginalised or excluded from their work: collective work, preventive work and counselling.

Collective work

Many of the participants in community care settings dismissed collective work:

‘I don’t think it is realistic, although we’d like, you know, we’d love to. But I just can’t see us getting the approval to do that sort of work. I mean students could. They don’t have the same sort of pressure on them to do just core business. I haven’t known many social workers do that sort of work’ (Denise).

Whilst participants thought that there might be benefits in moving beyond individual responses to women who were experiencing similar difficulties or who were requesting similar forms of support from services, they were sceptical about the possibilities of formulating such responses:

‘There is a carers’ group, and it’s, and we still have, there is still one social worker in the team who actually, she’s in a joint role with a nurse, that’s the way it’s been going for years. I can’t see us getting the funding or the sort of the agreement to actually run a new group. I mean the only groups that I know that have been set up in the last few years have been those when the students have done them, but, maybe in the voluntary sector you can. I can’t see it in the present social work climate here. Although it used to be, it even just sort of, I mean, four years ago it used to

be something that was talked about in team meetings, but not any more' (Candy).

Although some of the participants considered there were benefits to be gained in establishing various groups for women (for example, for carers, women with depression, single parents), they shared the view that this was increasingly difficult to achieve and remained only as a pipe-dream in supervision sessions:

'I think, within your own supervision, it is easier to keep that alive and it's easy to talk about a woman's isolation in the community and how can we put something in there to support her as a woman in the community and help build her self esteem. But, outside of supervision, the reality is very much that this will not happen' (Ruth).

One participant who was still working with groups of women was finding it increasingly difficult to do so:

'I've done groupwork packages for working with depressed women, where they are, I suppose if you want a more general description, sort of downtrodden by society and their situation in life and being stuck at home with small kids. I've also had people with post-natal depression in that group. It's certainly getting harder to work with quite a large group of women who can benefit enormously. Their only point of contact, usually, is the GP who may be nice and listen and say, "well never mind, dear, come back again next week and tell me how you're getting on", or he may just tell her to pull herself together like a pair of curtains, and it's getting harder to work with those women because of the government's push that we should be working with the severely mentally ill, you know, mad axe-

men and all that. So that is a restraint which is getting ever greater' (Elsie).

For participants who wanted to establish groups, difficulties arose over funding, because this aspect of work is not seen as core business:

'Our service manager is very keen on anti-racist and anti-sexist practice and she supports me quite a lot and she would actually try to find some money, if I wanted to run a group, but because the Department doesn't seem to be that committed to it, it's very difficult to get any time or money set aside to do the work we need to do' (Helen).

One participant, who was a team manager, thought it was unfair to see the demise of groupwork as a consequence of the social work reforms:

'There weren't very many groups before community care when I came here. They don't do any groupwork here now and this team is nothing like under pressure the way the others are. I think some people find it's useful to say, "well I can't do it anymore" because they probably didn't want to do it in the first place' (Amy).

The ambivalence of Amy's response is revealed as she goes on to explain that although, in principle, she would be happy to allow staff to participate in groupwork she regards this as problematic for reasons which relate to her view of core business:

'You can't spare people to go and do group work, because it's not crisis work. In principle, I'm happy for people to do groups, but it's got to be something that's worthwhile, not something I fancy doing so I can go off for several hours and I'm planning my groups, so everyone else is running,

you know, doing the day-to-day work while you're off supposedly planning, and there's very little evidence, you know, it's hard to actually get evidence that someone is actually using their time properly. Our first duty under the Community Care Act is to assess, and we've got time-scales, so if people are off doing groupwork, then they can't do their assessments and we're not meeting our legal obligations and our departmental, well our declaration to the public, that we will do this within so many weeks, days, or whatever, and we publish that in the Community Care Plan. I can't see any reason why people shouldn't do some groupwork, but my feeling is that people would not want to do it as well as their casework. They would want to leave the casework, jettison quite a lot. My problem would be to think about the rest of the team who would have to possibly carry the extra load' (Amy).

Preventive Work

The participants described the work they did as 'high risk' or 'high profile' and references were made to losing the 'nicey bits' and 'the little fillers' they associated with preventive work:

'I mean preventive work is minimal, these days. That just always seems to lose out. I mean we are basically high profile, basically first base for you know client interaction and stuff, and you know, it's high risk stuff that we deal with. So all the other nicey bits that would average out your case load are no longer there. These days all we ever have is either high risk or child protection stuff. Its really hot stuff' (Hilary).

The loss of the 'little fillers' had made the job less cheerful:

'We're only picking up things that are fairly heavy, that need a lot of input, and you don't get the little fillers, which like you know made your day a bit more cheerful. You could talk to somebody for five minutes and solve all their problems you know, you don't get that, so it's restricting in that sense' (Gita).

Preventive work is seen as having largely disappeared:

'Well since I've been here, it's never been preventive. It's always been very heavy-ended stuff. It feels like we're doing more and more of the child protection. Before it was accommodation and stuff. I suppose for experienced staff, all you seem to get is assessments, child protection and there is no creativity' (Iris);

'I mean we're very limited to what we can actually support and in sort of preventive areas of work we do very little because we just haven't got the bodies to deal with it, so we tend to deal with stuff that's escalating and might not have reached child protection, but would be quite serious children in need, and you're immediately in there with a sticking plaster, and you're not really addressing the root problems of what might be the issues for the family. In fact I often think, you don't ever really get to know what they are, unless for some reason a case becomes a long-term involvement' (Ruth).

Counselling

The participants raised the subject of counselling within their work. Their views were divided between those who saw counselling as possible

notwithstanding the constraints of 'core business' and others who saw counselling as only possible outside statutory settings. Thus some participants thought that although work might be prioritised by managerial systems, once allocated, counselling was still possible with women service users:

'The service that we can't provide now, that we used to be able to, like the counselling bit, it doesn't figure much in social work, you could do that, quite legitimately, because there is a fear as well, and people have said it here, even within the team, team members, that, "oh we can't do things like that", but you can, if you can argue a good enough case, then you will be allowed to do it. It's just that, I suppose, because of the pressure of work, it seems easier to close it off anyway' (Theresa).

Participants stressed the importance of incorporating counselling within assessment work:

'I think there is still time and space for using counselling skills in the assessment interview and in the follow-up work and the social worker should be doing that. I think that some of them are doing that, but they maybe don't recognise it because they think, unless I do a counselling session, or I set a group up and do a group with someone, that's not real social work. It's actually underselling their activity' (Amy);

'We still have scope as to how we carry out our work, as long as we're not spending huge amounts of time, I mean on things like counselling. It's not considered core business in itself, although it could be part of an assessment' (Candy).

Other participants thought service users would only be able to receive counselling outside statutory settings:

‘We wouldn’t be encouraged to adopt what’s called counselling when there are skilled counsellors that can do that in other organisations. But you can have a counselling approach, and maybe prolong the case for a number of weeks because it’s needed. But most social workers will shy off that, because it is not part of their work’ (Theresa);

‘We deal with child protection and then whatever comes to light. If the client needed counselling we would buy the service and that’s why I’m probably de-skilled. I did a counselling course at [‘X’] university. I got a Diploma in Counselling. I don’t use it’ (Zina).

It would seem that there remained only very limited opportunities, in only some settings, for collective work, preventive work or counselling within state social work. Such forms of practice have been curtailed by the introduction of managerialism, manifested in the concept of ‘core business’.

Computerisation

As we saw in Chapter Two, a significant managerial development in recent years has been the increased use of information technology systems in Social Services Departments. The Social Services Departments which employed the women social workers who took part in the present study used computerised records of assessments and continuing work. The participants took this for granted as part and parcel of their working life:

‘Social workers must spend probably half their working hours sitting in front of a computer screen. That ain’t social work, as most people think of it, but that is the reality’ (Elsie).

Theresa found computerised record-keeping limiting:

‘I think it’s just become more bureaucratic. I mean a lot of people [social workers] are getting to like it now. They use it a lot more than me. I have management functions on it, but I don’t have the day-to-day functions, although I am aware of how to do it. I don’t do as much as the practitioners. There are aspects of computerisation that have been absolutely painful to come to terms with. The drawbacks to me are the details that you can put on, it’s very limited’

Elsie outlined some of what she saw as the negative aspects of computerisation for her work as a practitioner in the mental health field. First, she saw the decision to have all assessments and service users’ records computerised as a means of managers overseeing the workload of social workers. The data the computer system produced provided them with statistical information on resources and finances:

‘I mean as a statistical base, you know, I’ve got this many clients I’m working with, fine, but that’s not what it’s for. It’s meant to replace all our recording. It’s very much for financial control, very much. The way the programme has been designed, as far as I can see, is like, you know, a business. Somebody is ordering something so you order it from the production department and it costs this much, you know, and then it gets sent out, and then it’s finished with and the order is complete, and it’s

very much based on that kind of thing. But if you are trying to put a service package together, we've got to use it because if we want money for somebody for something, you can't get the money unless all the information is on the computer, so those people, there are very few people actually, that we do get money for, but where that happens it will have to go on as a service package'.

Elsie's view of computerisation as primarily providing a means of surveillance by managers (see Chapter Two) was reflected in her frustration concerning the lack of utility the system had in relation to her practice in a mental health setting:

'I went on a mental health [computer] users' group when we first did the course training, and we argued for some decent pick-lists³ of the kinds of problems that people have and the type of work we do with them. We were saying, we want some proper things on there or else we're not doing it'.

A theme running through the topics raised by the data and considered so far has been the participants' experiences of discretion. The next section examines this in more detail.

Loss of discretion

The in-roads made by managerialism into social workers' use of discretion were discussed in general terms in Chapter Two. The participants in the study discussed their experiences in relation to the exercise of discretion:

³ 'Pick-lists' are pre-formatted categories from which social workers have to choose designations for service users' problems and their responses to them.

‘I mean the changes have been phenomenal, as you can imagine, from social work in the 70s, when there was no accountability at all, and team leaders, they wouldn't be called managers for heaven's sake, wouldn't even dare say to us, “where are you going? What time could we expect you back here?” They wouldn't dare to say that because you were autonomous. And now we've gone from that to clocking in and clocking out and being very accountable’ (Angela).

As we saw in the previous chapter, participants spoke about their appreciation of the boundaries established by the Children Act 1989 and the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 and by national and local policy guidelines because they valued the ‘good practice’ aspects of those boundaries and because they knew where they were. Thus, whilst recognising that the expression of legislation and policy in definitions of ‘core business’ meant they had little or no control over, in Derber’s terms (see Chapter Two), the ‘ends of their work’ (see previous section of this chapter), some participants considered they still had some autonomy about the ‘means’ by which those ends were achieved:

‘I have more autonomy with my work at the Health Centre than I do here. But even so, as long as we're working with core business here, then, we still have, we do still have some scope as to how we carry out that work’ (Candy).

Gaye contrasts the degree of autonomy she experiences as an out-of-hours duty social worker with that in a day-time team:

‘I don’t know, really know what all the constraints are, the checks and balances are in an area team, although I get a flavour of it, and I’m quite

glad I work from here [home]. My job is a bit unusual really, because it does leave a lot of free time, that I can go to other meetings, and work in groups at work, in a way where I'm not constrained by the checks and balances of the team. So, I don't know if I could say really on how the social work is practised day-to-day really' (Gaye).

In a health setting, a similar experience prevailed:

'A statutory setting has a lot of rules and regulations which they have to stick with which make them operate sometimes in a way which may be oppressive. We don't do that here. We work quite a lot with the health authority you see. Ultimately the doctors carry the can, and we work in a way that seems appropriate with that particular person and it can be any way you choose really' (Janis).

For some participants, the degree of autonomy experienced was influenced by the Team Manager or the Team Manager's location:

'To a great extent, I've got a lot of autonomy here, because there's no manager here. My manager is up the road. They know that we don't just do the people who social services say, you know the priority levels criteria for services. If we did, we'd hardly see any. We'd only see people with psychotic illness, people who'd been in hospital, people who'd tried to kill themselves which is quite different from when I first came to work here. And it's been brought about by government legislation, it's been brought about by rate-capping, as it used to be, ever tightening. There is no money for this, this and this, but having said that, because we've got quite a lot of autonomy down here, there is a broader spectrum of people

still seen. But that autonomy's going. It's going, slowly but surely it's going. Now my manager up the road is perfectly well aware that I'm seeing a slightly broader category of people than I should be, but they think that's a good idea you see, so they're not saying much about it, or else somebody above them will say, "well, stop her from doing that". So at a local level there is this sort of unspoken, "yeah, well, we won't say too much about that" (Elsie - in a Community Mental Health Team);

'Well, we're really lucky in this team because when the purchaser-provider split happened, we were like a hybrid from the start and we could buy in work if we wanted to buy in. We didn't actually pay for it, but you know what I mean. We could commission work from other teams or we could do it ourselves and we had a fairly forward thinking manager so, although we have to work to National Standards, the way we work isn't prescriptive, so you don't sort of get a young person that's done this so you pull out this programme and you know, go through it automatically. You design your own programme, in partnership with parents, looking at the needs of the young person' (Helen - in a Youth Justice Team).

The participants' accounts of their experiences suggest that women social workers have a greater degree of autonomy and discretion in out-posted jobs (Candy at a Health Centre, Gaye with the out-of-hours team and Janis in the health service team) and/or in settings which have a multi-disciplinary component (Candy and Janis again, and also Helen in Youth Justice). This suggests that the interaction of different managerial regimes in such settings

makes it more difficult for the managerial initiatives emanating from within Social Services Departments to operate to the extent that they do in settings which are clearly located within a Social Services Department. In relation to the latter settings, the participants' experiences suggest that negotiations with Team Managers may, if only at the margins, still allow women social workers some autonomy within which to exercise discretion and flexibility, but this remains at the level of work with individual service users. All of this suggests that the prospects for the forms of social work endorsed by the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature look poor. Only one participant linked the discussion of discretion to feminism:

‘When I first qualified, all the “isms” were at the front of my mind. I do think we worked in a different environment in 1986, to where we are now, and I certainly feel, if I look back, it seemed, when I was a social worker in 1986, there were more discussions around feminism and we were on strike, issues were important, and now, I guess that's the climate has changed. I think we haven't got as much autonomy and that you're constrained more by policy and practices’ (Cindy).

ACCOMMODATIONS WITH MANAGERIALISM

Whatever the participants' views on managerialism, as discussed so far, in their day-to-day work they had to reach an accommodation with it. Elsie had worked out where the limits of her autonomy were and saw herself as working within them rather than having to negotiate the extent of her discretion on a day-to-day basis:

‘I’ve been here so long I’m aware of how far I can go without running against a brick wall’.

Linda, a manager, had a questioning approach to the procedures and guidelines within which she was expected to work:

‘I still really live by the tenet that rules are there to help but are also there to be broken and so I see procedures and guidelines as a way of enabling us to work but not necessarily as being the way we should always work and so I see them as being something that is, if you like, it’s the framework, but that doesn’t stop you putting different material on the inside. It doesn’t stop you putting different pictures in. It doesn’t stop you challenging. When I look back through my social work career, I mean, things that were policies and procedures at the point when I started, are real no-nos now. Now if someone hadn’t challenged them they’d still be the policies and procedures of today’ (Linda).

A similar approach is suggested by Cindy, a practitioner:

‘We can’t change all the policies and procedures as perhaps we’d like to, but we can endeavour to put the needs of families and children first and ensure that, I guess, on a case-by-case basis that we’re working as far as possible in a anti-discriminatory way’ (Cindy).

Janis stressed that state social work had always been shaped by legislation which she regards as a framework within which she seeks to identify, and work within, the boundaries of her autonomy:

‘You've got to keep the standards up and I just think it's important that we do that. I've always tried to maintain a level of professionalism. It's about maintaining ground rules, being aware of what is your responsibility, what isn't your responsibility, what you can influence, what you can't influence. It's all very important. Social work has always been a method of social control, and whatever my principles, I have had to conform to the legislative framework of the day’ (Janis).

CHALLENGES TO MANAGERIALISM

Within the employing department

The feminist social work literature (see Chapter One) promotes the organisational context as an operational arena, in which the existing priorities and orientation of services are to be overhauled in the interests of women. As we saw, Orme, for example, maintains that ‘feminist praxis...seeks to challenge and transform policy, practice and the organisation of service delivery, which constrains people in gender-specific roles or oppresses them by the inappropriate exercise of power’ (Orme 1998: 227).

The participants in the present study were pessimistic about being able to exert such influence:

‘I feel a bit defeated most days, both in terms of promoting myself as a lesbian and as a feminist, and trying to influence Departmental perspectives about anti-oppressive practice. As, Martina Navratilova said, if you want to know the difference between commitment and involvement, think of ham and eggs. The chicken is involved but the pig

is committed and I start off being like the chicken, but by the end of the week I feel more like the pig. You just have to conserve your energy and pick fights that are most important' (Angela).

Some participants made a distinction between the team level and beyond that level:

'It's very, very frustrating. In terms of my immediate management and my team, it's very comfortable to challenge and to discuss and to try and move things on. So on a micro level I can do that. On a macro Departmental level, it's much harder and the only way you can bring about change is to move things up the line management. We have a team briefing where it comes back from the Director down and we're supposed to feed comments up, but I'm not sure how far up they go' (Iris).

The team level emerges as possessing possibilities for some variation in approach:

'We've probably got more time to think about anti-oppressive practice here than in 'X' team. I think we have a chance to take issues up. It's a personal responsibility. It's to do with your environment, the support that is there. At 'X', they had policies about oppressive language etc. but in actual practice, I think it was very difficult' (Donna).

For many participants, the difficulties still involved in challenging the use of oppressive language in the organisational context illustrated the obstacles in the path of change. Gaye said that she felt it was easier to confront services users about their language usage:

‘I suppose if I’m honest, more often than not, there are pressures against making challenges within the organisation. I find it easier when I’m working with children or teenagers or other service users’.

Nevertheless Linda, a manager, thought that careful use of terminology was a way of bringing about organisational changes in attitudes to women:

‘I do place importance on terminology. It is not about getting into Personchester instead of Manchester, but actually making sure that staff talk about staffing a building and not manning a building. That we talk about increasing the number of staff hours not man hours. I think if we can actually move away from gender-specific terminology as much as possible, without getting silly about it, then we can actually bring about a change in attitude because I do think language is very powerful in terms of changing attitudes’.

Participants who were practitioners were pessimistic about the impact they had, particularly when other women were using language which the participants regard as oppressive:

‘I think that the language that we use on the team is very, very masculinist. We use the word “he” as a generic term for men and women, which I find offensive. When posters are put up like that, I ask for them to be taken down. Like, one went up a few weeks ago about “who is the client? He is the most important person who can walk through these doors. He is this, he is that”. I asked for that to be taken down and it was. That would have been a good opportunity for discussions about how a woman client coming through the door might have been made to feel

invisible by that poster, let alone me as a woman worker. That's one example' (Anita);

'My suggestions for changing the language of the organisation are met with, "oh well, she would say that wouldn't she, she's a man-hater". So, if I suggest that we don't talk about manning the phones, or keeping master copies of things, I find I'm quite easily dismissed, because they think of me as quite an extremist. I can't claim to have made an impact at all' (Angela);

'Language doesn't change much. The hardest thing for me is the women who use the same language as the men and support the men when they are being sexist' (Denise).

In other organisational work settings

The feminist social work literature, reviewed in Chapter One, proposed that women social workers should not only regard their own organisations as a target for intervention in the interests of women but should also attempt to influence other agencies with which they came into contact. The three examples which follow, draw on the experiences of a practitioner working in a youth justice team and two practitioners working in a hospital social work department:

'You can feel oppressed as a professional in the police station and in the courts and the whole set-up in the police station is about oppression, isn't it really, and, when you're a woman worker in the court you can feel very out of place because it's predominantly male and judges and magistrates can be judgmental and sexist' (Helen).

Gita and Angela had similar concerns about working with hospital consultants:

‘Well, the consultants are all men. They are the most peculiar men too. When they don’t get their own way they jump up and down and stamp their feet. I mean, they’re like babies’.(Gita)

[Q: How do you respond?]

‘Well, there are some occasions you might deal with it and some occasions where you just say, “oh well, that’s that”. If I can possibly avoid consultants, I tend to do that. I’m not interested in that sort of reaction, but if I come face to face with them, and they say, “look, this simply isn’t good enough, you know, blah, blah, blah”, I just say, “well, this is what we do, this is what we’ve done, this is what we can do, and that’s what I can offer, that’s what Social Services can do”. Or I say, “well, actually it’s up to my managers not to me, go and see them if you want to”, so I just say what my position is’ (Gita);

‘Well, I mean of course the hospital hierarchy is, I mean it is just so male dominated. It’s very very white of course, its very straight, its very conservative, you know with a big “C” and a little “c” and I sometimes feel like a fish out of water’ (Angela).

Links with voluntary organisations

Participants were more positive about links with voluntary sector organisations. They regarded the increased use of the voluntary sector as a significant development which had arisen out of the social work reforms. They suggested three functions which the voluntary sector performed.

First, voluntary organisations were able to be more 'radical' than social workers in Social Services Departments, by campaigning on behalf of service users:

'In a local authority, it is very difficult to be radical or pro-active. You have to work within, you don't move very far in the boundaries that have been set. The actual set-up doesn't allow you really to go for some big campaign of change. I think there may be some areas in children's services, like this family centre, that people can actually do something a little bit along those lines, but it's not going round with a banner. You need to go into the voluntary sector if you really want to campaign' (Amy);

'I mean it could better be done sometimes by an organisation not working within the constraints of local authority, local government' (Liza);

'Let's look maybe at taking it out of this arena, outside to the voluntary agency where, where you might be able to campaign or do something that's a bit more radical than what you can achieve within your agency' (Theresa).

Secondly, voluntary organisations were used to refer on work which fell outside definitions of 'core business', for example counselling, benefits advice, housing problems:

'You can refer on to the voluntary sector. You probably wouldn't be able to have the involvement yourself, but at least you'd have the satisfaction that you'd pointed people in the right direction to get some change' (Denise).

Finally, voluntary organisations were more flexible and women-friendly:

‘Often agencies outside the SSD can be perceived as more women-friendly and have less of a power structure’ (Ruth).

Feminist organisations and campaigns

The feminist social work literature encourages women social workers to involve themselves in feminist organisations and campaigns as an aspect of their practice (see Chapter One). The participants were asked if they were involved in such activity. Only two of the twenty participants had any such links. Both of these women were members of a local Rape Crisis Centre. One of them was also involved in a number of activities inside and outside her organisation which involved working with and representing women:

‘I don't see it as political. It's a personal thing because, you know, the fact that somebody has been downtrodden in some way really sort of fires me. Its almost like if the Department's saying they've got an equal opps policy let them put their money where their mouth is then and if they're oppressing this particular person, then it could happen to anyone of us, myself included’ (Olive).

The remaining participants stated that they had no time or energy left over for outside activities.

WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT

The examination of women social workers' experiences of managerialism now continues with a brief outline of issues pertaining to women and management and an exploration of the participants' stances on management. As

we saw in Chapter One, some feminist social work writers argue that women social workers should seek promotion and engage with management agendas in order to advance women's interests:

'Management cannot be ignored by feminists. It is an important and strategic role and the site of power in every organisational setting. We must participate in it if women's priorities are ever to be equally represented and reflected in the structure of work' (Coyle, quoted in Everitt 1991:135).

The national staffing pattern is discussed and compared with the staffing patterns in the three Social Services Departments encompassed by the case study. Some aspects of the experience of being a manager and thinking about moving into management are then considered.

National staffing patterns

The Department of Health's statistics on the number of people employed in Social Services Departments show that 223,500 staff were employed by English local authorities in September 1998 (Department of Health 1999). These national statistics are compiled from a return (SSDS001) submitted by local authorities to the Department of Health each year on staffing in their Social Services Departments. This return provides the authority-by-authority data from which the composite national data is produced in the Department of Health's staffing bulletins.

The last staffing return, which local authorities had to submit by 30th September 1999, required them to provide staffing information broken down by

gender, for the first time. This information about gender will be part of a national Social Services Workforce Analysis to be published late in 2000 (Department of Health 2000, personal communication). Therefore, as yet, current national data are not available from the Department of Health which break down staffing by gender.

However, the general pattern over time is well known and has been the subject of much attention in the feminist social work literature (see Chapter One). Nearly ten years ago, the Social Services Inspectorate produced figures which showed that whilst 86% of the workforce were women, they occupied only 18% of senior positions and only 12% of the Directors of Social Services were women (Department of Health/Social Services Inspectorate 1991). Ginn and Fisher's later findings continued to show that 'the more senior the management position, the less frequently it was occupied by women' and that 'despite the creation of many more English authorities by 1997, the proportion of women Directors remained the same' (Ginn and Fisher 1999: 130). Thus it has been argued that in spite of the widespread adoption of equal opportunities policies, the available evidence suggests that Social Services Departments have not made significant inroads into the promotion of women in management (Newman 1995: 16).

Case study staffing patterns

Part of the present case study involved consideration of the staffing patterns by gender in the three Social services Departments in which the women social workers who participated in the study were employed. The data on staffing

in the three Departments was compiled from copies of their SSDS001 returns which were completed in September 1999 and which were provided by them for use in the present case study. The returns are calculated in whole time equivalents. From the Departments' individual returns I have compiled Table 7.1, which provides a composite picture of the staffing patterns in the three Social Services Departments.

	S-C MGT		OP MGT		CHILD CARE						COMMUNITY CARE					
					TMs		ATMs/SSWs		Social Wkers		TMs		ATMs/SSWs		Social Wkers	
SSD	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
A	3	3	8	8	11	5	30	3	103	31	6	1	8	4	69	18
B	1	3	2	3	11	2	16	8	40	14	6	1	7	3	17	8
C	1	3	13	7	9	7	3	0	74	27	2	3	5	0	36	20

Table 7.1: Gender breakdown at different levels in the three Social Services Departments, compiled from each Department's SSDS001, as submitted to the Department of Health, 30th September 1999.

Key
 S-C: Strategic and central management
 OP: Operational management
 TMs: Team managers
 ATMs: Assistant team managers
 SSWs: Senior social workers

At strategic and central management level, only Department 'A' has an equal number of women and men (one of the women is the Director), with Departments 'B' and 'C' having a 75/25 split between men and women at this level. At operational management level in Departments 'A' and 'B' the posts are

more or less equally divided between women and men and in department 'C' there is a preponderance of women at this level. At the Team Manager level, there is a majority of women in all three Departments with the exception of Team Managers in community care settings in Department 'C'. The trend towards women being in the majority is intensified when the Assistant Team Manager/Senior Social Worker level is reached and, as would be anticipated, this intensifies still further at the social worker level. All three Departments have a higher representation than might have been anticipated of women in management posts, given the available evidence of the national staffing pattern to date.

Despite this, the participants clearly did not experience their employing Departments as having cultures which represented the interests of women, as was apparent earlier in the chapter. The data compiled in the table, when compared to participants' accounts of their experiences, support Newman's view that 'a focus on numbers alone is not enough to bring about organisational change' (Newman 1995: 11) and does not necessarily lead to a feminisation of organisational culture. There seems little evidence in the participants' accounts of the 'feminisation of management' and the development of 'alternative ways of working with, and opening up the possibilities of change for, other women' (Newman 1995: 12). Wise's comment that everything would not change 'if all men left social work tomorrow' (Wise 1995: 116) seems particularly apposite with regard to management.

Being a manager

Those participants who were managers reflected on being a woman manager in what they experienced as a masculinist environment:

‘I have to think about my own self preservation and my own aspirations within this Department and I know, regardless of what the equal opportunities policies say, that it’s not good if your name gets known as a trouble maker’(Olive);

‘I’ve got the challenge of being a woman manager with all male staff at the moment, apart from the clerk. Luckily, I had supervised male social workers already. It would have been very difficult, I think, coming here not having supervised any males. I mean I did feel quite nervous coming in on the first day.’ (Anna G);

‘I worked in a totally female team in [‘X’], and on the one hand, I mean, I was fresh out of college and I thought that was pretty good, you know, women together, we can change the world kind of thing, but when I came into youth justice I had to stand up for myself a lot more. The men took the view that, well, they appeared to take the view that, they were more professional, that they could get on better with the police, you know. It was more buddy-buddy and they could deal with it and so to survive in the team I suppose I had to become more assertive, more self-confident, prove myself as a manager. I think I had to work harder, to achieve the same level as they did’ (Helen)

The participants talked about hiding their emotions for fear of not being taken seriously by their organisations:

‘There are times when being a woman gets in the way of me challenging, I have to say that, and I mean that sounds like an odd thing to do from someone who hardly finds it difficult to challenge at all, but there are times when I feel so strongly about something that I know that the way that I'm going to express it is going to be a very emotional way of expressing it and I choose not to express it because I don't want it to be dismissed as being an emotion response from a woman, so there are times, yes, when I won't challenge because I don't want the challenge to be dismissed I will have to think about it and find other ways of going back to that. I mean, I don't want people to see the tears in my eyes and not listen to the words, you know, so, and I'm sure that exists for some men as well, but it does prevent me from challenging’(Linda);

‘I mean I do get angry, mostly I get upset, and sometimes I have to come back to the office and I go into the toilet and have a bit of a cry. I'm not very good at letting people see me getting upset, because you know there's this thing, over involved, can't keep a good professional distance, so I'm a bit wary about that. So I have a bit of a cry and I come out and I think, right mate, I'll do something about this, and, you're right about not being able to change the system, but I do believe in the dripping tap effect, and I think we can, we can have a positive input into individual people and to their families’ (Liza).

Moving on to management

As we saw in Chapter Four, four of the participants in this case study were already in management posts. Two of them in child care settings and two in community care. Seven of the women were senior social workers in child care and one was a senior in community care. The remainder were social workers. The latter were asked about whether they envisaged applying for managerial posts. Their responses fell into two categories. Three of them thought women were not viewed as potential management material, although as we have seen, the evidence in the three Social Services Departments suggests otherwise:

‘Lip service is given to equal opportunities, but accepted practice is, that women don’t get managerial posts’ (Janis);

‘People I did my ASW course with are all managers now. Women only apply for jobs if they think they can do them. Men apply for things that challenge them. Men just apply’ (Donna);

‘I was waiting, I suppose, for somebody to say, why don’t you do this, and of course, that will never happen. But since branching out a bit myself, I’ve realised that I’ve got to take these opportunities myself. Nobody is going to come and say, “why don’t you do the management training this year. It’ll be just right for you”. Nobody has ever said that to me’ (Gaye).

The other type of response was a stress on the importance of retaining contact with practice:

‘I wouldn’t want to be a manager. I’m hooked on practice and the thing that keeps me going at that hospital are the patients because some of them

are absolutely beautiful, and some of them I've absolutely adored and have seen that I've made a difference to them. I just really like working with clients' (Angela);

'I'm drawn more to therapeutic work than to management. If you look at the way things are going you just get de-skilled' (Donna);

'I don't think management is for me. I've recently had a crack at it. Our team manager went, moved up one, and I moved into his shoes, and I suppose I've always felt a sense, I've assumed that being in a managerial position that you lose contact with practice completely, that the function that you undertake bears no reality at all to any evidence from practice and I was able to test that out. It's absolutely true' (Theresa).

For Theresa and Angela, their concerns about being removed from practice were combined with anxiety about having to make personal compromises in order to accommodate to the management culture:

'We're split on two floors. The manager never came to see upstairs people and I often said to him, "you ought to come upstairs and have a cup of coffee with us, we want to see you", but he never did. Then, when I was in that position myself [on an acting up basis], in what had been his room, I got a sense of, gosh, I must get upstairs today because I haven't seen anybody and I've got to do it, and it was a conscious thought that I had to keep with me otherwise I would not have done it. You could be behind that door and nobody would ever know you're there. I hated that. It's just something about the role that cuts you off. And so I'm glad really that I didn't take that on permanently. It still wouldn't interest me. You

know, I'd be stuck behind that thing all day [points to computer] and in meetings. But the meetings, again, are so far from the reality of everyday work' (Theresa);

'If I'm being very honest, I'm far too controlling to be a manager. I want people to come in on time, and I want people to be accountable, and I want to know that they've done a good job, so I'd make their lives miserable and I'd make my own life miserable' (Angela).

Three of the women social workers thought that career advancement depended on possession of 'managerial assets' (Causer and Exworthy 1999: 99) and had enrolled on external management courses in the hope that being associated with what was seen as the discrete and privileged body of managerialist knowledge would lead to their promotion:

'I hope to apply for a senior's job in this team. I hope to get a serious academic qualification now I've started on this route, so I'd like to. I don't like to say anything in words in case I never achieve it really, but I'd quite like to do the MBA eventually. So yes, if our senior moves on, then I might apply, or even might apply for the team manager's job. I wish I had done this training ten years ago' (Gaye);

'At the moment I'm doing management, postgraduate management at 'X' University, so I'm keeping abreast of all the changes. I would like to go into management at some stage' (Zina);

'I'm doing a course in my own time, a course on management, to help with doing this job and for my own personal development really. I asked ['X'] if the course was available through our Staff Development section.

They have got access to a Diploma in Management Studies course run through the central Personnel Department. I didn't realise that it was still available but, I mean, I couldn't have the time out to do it, so there was no point in asking really' (Amy).

CONCLUSION

The first research question which was posed at the beginning of this chapter was:

- Following the introduction of managerialism, what do women social workers identify as the current features of state social work organisations and what are their experiences of the impact of these features on their practice?

The participants in the study identified positive and negative aspects of managerialism. The aspects of managerialism which were seen as positive were the 'good practice' associated with consistency of decision-making and the encouragement of service user participation, together with an appreciation of greater predictability in the participants' work. Other aspects of managerialism had negative connotations: increased involvement in financial aspects; shortage of resources; having to remain within 'core business'; the closing down of practice possibilities (with regard to collective work, preventive work and counselling); computerisation; and loss of discretion. The participants accommodated to these negative features by means of a combination of disciplining themselves to act on their awareness of where the limitations were and negotiating small amounts of flexibility when that was possible. The

opportunities to challenge managerialism, either in their employing departments or other organisational work settings, were regarded as minimal by the participants. Links with voluntary organisations were regarded more positively and two of the participants had links with feminist organisations. What these findings suggest, as anticipated in Chapter Two, is that following the introduction of managerialism the features of state social work organisations are experienced by women social workers as antipathetic to proposals contained within the dominant paradigm of the feminist social work literature.

The second research question was:

- How do women social workers regard their involvement/potential involvement in managerialism?

The staffing patterns for each of the three Social Services Departments produced different profiles than might have been anticipated in terms of existing information about the number of women in management posts. When the Department of Health data for all Social Services Departments becomes available at the end of 2000, it will become clear whether these three Departments are part of a national trend or whether they are simply atypical Social Services Departments, in which more women have 'broken through' into management than elsewhere. However, even if this staffing pattern is revealed later to be part of a more general trend, the interview data suggest that simply having women in management does not necessarily change the organisational culture from which existing women managers felt estranged but which some potential managers still wished to enter.

SECTION C

CONCLUDING FROM WOMEN SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF STATE SOCIAL WORK

Having begun by contextualising women social workers' experiences in *Section A*, through discussions of the feminist social work literature, state social work and social work education, *Section B* was concerned with a consideration of women social workers' experiences in relation to research questions arising out of: the dominant paradigm within feminist social work, social work education and the impact of new managerialism. The final chapter of the thesis draws together the contribution of the thesis from *Sections A* and *B* and then turns to the prospects for addressing women's interests in state social work.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The thesis began with an account of feeling a failure, of having failed to see through the business of being a ‘proper’ feminist social worker. That sense of failure was translated into a sharpening awareness of the points of tension between the feminist social work literature and anecdotal accounts of seeking to address women’s interests in social work. The thesis set off to follow up the points of tension between academic and experiential accounts in the directions of contextualising and considering women social workers’ experiences. In contextualising women social workers’ experiences, the thesis saw through state social work. It passed beyond the immediate, everyday, surface appearance of state social work in order to uncover its defining characteristics. In considering women’s experiences, the thesis saw state social work through women social workers’ experiences, in viewing it from their vantage point.

This final chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the contribution it has made in the process of seeing through state social work in both of those senses and then proposes how women social workers might see through (persevere with) state social work through accommodation with managerialism.

IDENTITY, EGALITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

The thesis has challenged, theoretically and empirically, the dominant paradigm in the feminist social work literature (see Chapter One) which suggests that women social workers in state social work should align themselves with a feminist identity and engage in egalitarian relationships with women service users, with the goal of empowerment. The thesis has demonstrated the existence of diverse identities, identifications and stances amongst the women social workers who participated in the research (see Chapter Five), with no strong discernible patterns in the responses, for example in relation to ethnicity or sexuality. None of the participants primarily aligned themselves with a feminist identity as a stance from which to approach their work. For two of the participants, their engagement with what 'feminist' meant fed into a broader anti-discriminatory agenda, as suggested by Wise and Langan (see Chapter One), rather than steering them towards feminist social work as represented by the dominant paradigm. The majority of the participants were, each in their own terms, seeking to use feminism in some measure, or to use principles they perceived as being derived from it, with varying degrees of attachment to the term 'feminist'. 'Feminist' had stronger support as a term which indicated their commitment to women's interests within an overarching notion of anti-discriminatory and /or anti-oppressive practice than it did as a term of self-identity and self-identification. Again, Langan's (1992) and Wise's (1995) formulations of anti-discriminatory practice capture the stances of the majority of the participants more effectively than the proposals of the dominant paradigm.

The thesis has shown that the participants considered the creation of egalitarian relationships with women service users, another aspect of the dominant paradigm, as not being feasible (see Chapter Six). It was possible to infer a level of unacknowledged shared experience with women service users on the part of the participants but this fell well short of the possibility of egalitarian relationships and might be more appropriately referred to as latent empathy. There was a similar lack of evidence for the existence of empowerment, as portrayed by the dominant paradigm (see Chapters One and Six). Instead, participants endorsed the employment of a more elastic concept of empowerment as participation. Partnership was identified as a concrete expression of empowerment but this was seen as problematic, indicating some of the difficulties which were experienced in realising empowerment as participation within the constraints of state social work practice. The explicit expectations and anticipated outcomes of partnership appeared to lead social workers from the abstract principle and rhetorical flourishes of empowerment and back into the dilemmas and constraints of state social work.

STATE SOCIAL WORK

The thesis has brought the statutory context into the foreground and provided a more detailed elaboration of it (see Chapter Two) than that found in the feminist social work literature. Within the dominant paradigm, the proposals for feminist social work are concerned with what women social workers' practice ought to be like, but the thesis has shown that this formulation of feminist social work is detached from an understanding of the nature of state

social work as it is (see Chapters One and Two). The elaboration of state social work as a state-mediated profession, operating in and through a bureau-professional regime, was thus an essential corrective to the lacuna in the dominant paradigm. Providing an analytical framework for state social work not only contextualised the experiences of women social workers but also revealed that their room for manoeuvre in influencing the nature of their practice with women service users lay in the means by which they undertook the state's legislatively-defined ends of their work. In contrast, we saw that in much of the feminist social work literature, women social workers are presented as making choices about the ends, as well as the means, of their work with women service users and are thus seen as possessing the autonomy to transcend the implementation of statutory duties on the state's behalf (see Chapter One). Furthermore, as we saw in the discussion of new managerialism (Chapter Two), social work education (Chapter Three) and the data from the study (Chapter Seven), women social workers' discretion concerning the means of undertaking their work now also seems to be under pressure.

PROSPECTS FOR ADDRESSING THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN

The indications are that New Labour's agenda may close down still further openings for feminist social work of the kind envisaged in the dominant paradigm. Modernising Social Services (1998), the Performance Assessment Framework (1999) and Best Value (2000), together with the Training Organisation for the Personal Social Services (an industry-led training organisation replacing CCETSW), indicate the possibility of even closer scrutiny

and interventionist management of performance by central government, passed down as ‘a sequence or cycle of activity laid down by line managers rather than professionals working within their own knowledge base (Adams 1998: 261). A range of audit frameworks (see examples given below in Table 8.1) will continue

OPTIONAL	COMPULSORY
ISO 9000 Series	Best Value
Business Excellence Model	Performance Assessment Framework
Investors in People	SSI Thematic Inspections
Charter Mark	Joint Reviews

Table 8.1 Examples of Audit Frameworks
(Compiled from Jones 1999)

to undermine the realisation of feminist social work, as envisaged in the dominant paradigm, by focusing on the consistency of processes and outcomes and/or the quality of services and/or achievement against specific criteria.

If we take Best Value Inspections as an example, the continuing tight control which will be exercised over state social work becomes clear. The Local Government Act (1999) introduced a duty of best value for local authorities: ‘A duty to deliver services to clear standards - covering both cost and quality - by the most economic, efficient and effective means available’ (Audit Commission 2000: 1). Local authorities have been undertaking reviews of all the services which they provide in readiness for their inspection by the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission will judge local authorities on how well they are currently providing a service, on a rating from nought to three stars, and on how likely the service is to improve. The reports on local authorities will show how the services inspected compared with those of other authorities, or with different services within the same authority, and will make recommendations on how local authorities can achieve Best Value. The Secretary of State has powers to intervene in cases of 'service failure' (Audit Commission 2000: 4). Such an approach does not seem conducive to the development of feminist social work, as presented in the dominant paradigm.

SEEKING AN ACCOMMODATION?

As Wise has argued, the statutory context closes off specifically feminist ends for social work (Wise 1995). Given the developments which are still taking place and which threaten to restrict the room for manoeuvre within state social work still further, the realisation of the dominant paradigm's model of feminist social work appears to face insurmountable difficulties. If we accept that social work is in a relatively subordinate (Webb 1996: 163), if not increasingly subordinate, position within the state, the dominant paradigm's encouragement to women social workers to try to develop the conditions for its formulation of feminist social work in the state sector is likely to be rendered increasingly redundant. If that is the case, an accommodation with state social work, based on attempting to further women's interests where possible under the guise of anti-discriminatory practice (Langan 1992; Wise 1995), seems the only feasible alternative. A strategy of accommodation sees through state social work, in terms

of what its defining characteristics are, and offers women social workers a means of seeing through their jobs in ways which acknowledge the circumstances in which they find themselves. The participants in the research had a sense of the accommodations they made with managerialism in undertaking their day-to-day work (Chapter Seven). Is it possible to take this beyond a process of individual accommodation?

Whilst the continuing influence of managerialism is undeniable it may be possible to interrupt and disturb it at some points, within an overarching strategy of accommodation. We saw in Section B that although women social workers' identities were more ambivalent and ambiguous than those presented in the feminist social work literature, they still reflected agendas which went beyond succumbing completely, and unthinkingly, to managerialism. We saw evidence that despite the codification and computerisation of social work, the responses of women social workers were not completely programmed; managerialism requires responses to service users which draw to some extent upon women social workers' interpretations and the use of their judgement. The managerial objectives of social work cannot be achieved by the simple imposition of bureaucratic regulations. Categorising need and meeting it with a standardised response is rarely sufficient for the completion of social work tasks (Lymbery 1998: 876) and an element of continued discretion is still required, even in managerialised bureau-professional regimes. Reliance on the informal negotiation of solutions to problems, with imposed formal solutions only as the last resort, remains largely the terrain on which social work still operates (Jordan 1987, 1990).

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- ***Opting out.*** Women social workers could promote a radical agenda which cannot be realised in state social work or could simply give up.

In rejecting these three options in favour of accommodation with managerialism, (based on an engagement with its agendas and a realistic appraisal of state social work, rather than the continued assertion of what feminist social work ought to be like and should be doing), women social workers would be obliged to accept that, at best, only modest incremental change is possible. Only on the basis of thorough analysis will we know whether small-scale adjustments, in the interests of women, are possible within organisational regimes. Such an analysis of the potential for change would contain tensions between pragmatism and principle and would need to focus on political, policy and practice contingencies. In other words, it would be an analysis of contextualised power relations (Wise 1995: 104, 116) which would need to be realistic and specific (Langan and Lee 1989: 8-9; 14) about what is possible in connecting state social work with women's interests.

APPENDIX ONE

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

There is now a wide range of feminist social work literature in Australia which addresses the oppression of women (Fook 1993:14). Fook draws attention to the influence of British (Brook and Davies 1985; Dominelli and McLeod 1989) and American (Gottlieb 1980; Bricker-Jenkins and Hooyman 1986) writers on the development of the Australian literature.

Australian feminists draw on a number of political perspectives (radical, socialist, Marxist and liberal) and have been influenced by theories of difference and the impact of postmodernism (Wood 1999; Pease and Fook 1999). Marchant and Wearing (1986) highlight the similarities which exist between Britain and Australia in relation to the feminist principles advocated for social work practice (see Chapter One). Feminist social work has influenced social work theories and methods, for example in relation to child protection and domestic violence (Mendes 1997; Fraser 1997; Weeks 1992), older women (Heycox 1997) and disabled women (Meekosha 1989).

A distinguishing characteristic of developments in Australia is feminist intervention in the state, which can be tracked back to the 1970s with the introduction of the Women's Electoral Lobby. The WEL was seen as a key development in feminist intervention, aimed at improving the social and material lives of women (Watson 1990). The 1980s witnessed a revitalisation in the feminist literature on theorising about the state, particularly in relation to feminists who were employed in managerial positions and who referred to as 'femocrats'. Femocrats have received mixed reactions from feminists working outside the state

arena. Despite disagreements about the femocrat strategy, there is no doubt that it has been significant in securing funding and shaping the nature and characteristics of feminist organisations (Watson 1990: Melville 1993). This is in contrast to Britain where feminist engagement with the state has been very limited (Bruegel and Keane 1995). The only significant movement in this area was the development of the GLC in 1980, which gave hope to writers like Dominelli and McLeod (1989) who stated that 'as the work of local authorities endorsing feminist issues and the by now widespread networks of women's committees in local authorities indicates, feminist social workers are not necessarily on a collision course with the local state' (1989: 17). Watson (1999) maintains that the subsequent failure by feminists to secure a lasting hold in local government in the UK was in part a result of the desire by feminists to improve funding for women's activities outside local government, rather than trying to transform or shift policies inside, in the interests of women, as in the Australian case.

Feminist social work practice in the USA, developed out of the Women's Liberation movement. Over the last 25 years, feminist social work literature has emerged in relation to practice, research and social work organisations. Like many of their British counterparts, feminist academics in the USA are concerned with the transformational aspects of feminist practice: 'feminism is...a political perspective concerned with changing extant economic, social and political structures (Van den Bergh and Cooper 1986: 1). American feminist social work writing shares a number of features with that of the UK and Australia: first, proposals for principles of practice (see Chapter One). Secondly drawing on a number of theoretical approaches; liberal, radical and socialist (Collins 1986).

Thirdly, recognition of diversity and difference and lastly the influence of postmodernism (Sands and Nuccio 1992).

Bricker-Jenkins (1991) maintains that feminism has invaded every corner of social work practice in the USA and is no longer confined to alternative agencies. Other writers stress the influence of feminism on the social work curriculum and its integration into every field of social work practice with women (Hooyman and Bricker-Jenkins 1986, 1991; Norman and Mancuso 1980; Van den Bergh and Cooper 1986).

APPENDIX TWO

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

As you know from the letter, I am doing research with women practice teachers about what I will call for now 'women's perspectives' in social work.

I would prefer to tape the interview so that I am free to concentrate on what you are saying, without having to take notes, and so that the record of our conversation is as accurate as possible. Is that O.K?

(If yes:) I will send a transcript of our conversation to you so that you can check it for accuracy, add anything to it which comes to you after we have finished today, delete anything which you do not want included in the writing up of the research.

No-one I speak to will be identified when the research is written up. The material will be made anonymous using pseudonyms.

Summarise content of the interview.

Biographical details

I want to collect some biographical information, if possible. If you want to decline to answer any of the biographical questions, please feel free to do so.

Length of time in social work...

Current post...

Area of work...

Year of accreditation as a practice teacher...

Age....

Ethnicity...

Physical impairment...

Sexuality/sexual orientation...

Social divisions

I want to talk about practice which addresses social divisions.

Some of the terms I have come across which are used to refer to practice which addresses social divisions are:-

non-oppressive/non-discriminatory/anti-oppressive/anti-discriminatory/anti-racist/anti-sexist/feminist/anti-heterosexist/anti-disablist.

I'm sure there are more.

Which of these terms, or other terms I haven't mentioned, do you usually use?

Why do you use that particular term(s)?

Do you use any other terms?

Why?

Women's perspectives

Similarly, I want talk about practice which addresses women's interests.

I have come across a number of terms which are used to refer to practice which addresses women's interests. Some of the terms I have come across are:-

gender awareness/women's perspectives/anti-sexism/women-centred/feminist.

I'm sure there are more.

Which of these terms, or other terms I haven't mentioned, do you usually use?

Why do you use that particular term(s)?

Do you use any other terms?

Why?

Feminist social work

Would you use the terms feminist and/or feminist social worker to describe yourself?

Why?/Why not?

Own Practice

In what ways is your own practice influenced by "women's perspectives" (substitute participant's preferred term as given earlier)?

To what extent? How ? In what ways?

How do “women’s perspectives”(substitute participant’s term again) fit into a statutory setting?

Is it possible for you to form egalitarian relationships with women service users?

Examples?

What do you understand by the term empowerment?

Organisation

In your own work, is it possible to challenge from “women’s perspectives” (substitute term)?

Your team

and/or

agency policy/practice

and/or

other organisations’ policy/practice

If ‘yes’, examples?

If ‘no’, why not?

Do you belong to any women’s organisations and/or are you involved in any women’s campaigns/issues?

Managerialism

Do you think your department has become more managerial?

In what ways?

Are these features positive/negative?

How do you find being a manager?/Have you considered becoming a manager?

LETTER TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Vicky White
Department of Social Policy and
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University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 7AL



Direct Dial: 01203 524599
Departmental no: 523164
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Dear

I am carrying out a study of women's perspectives in social work.

I am approaching women who have completed the Practice Teaching Award to see whether they would be prepared to be interviewed. Would you be prepared to do so?

If you agree to take part, the interview would last for approximately one hour. I would be happy to come to your workplace unless some other arrangement would be more convenient.

Confidentiality will be maintained in relation to all participants in the study.

I would be grateful if you would return the tear-off slip by.....

I hope you will feel able to take part. If you need to know more before reaching a decision, please ring me.

I look forward to meeting and talking with you.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

This is convenient / not convenient

(If you wish to take part but this arrangement is inconvenient, please suggest an alternative date and time.)

APPENDIX FOUR

DATA REFERRED TO IN CHAPTER FIVE

Table App.4.1. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘anti-discriminatory’ and ‘anti-oppressive’.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Linda	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I don’t think one term covers everything. I use “anti-oppressive practice” as a generic term for practice and “anti-discriminatory practice” to focus on a particular aspect of practice’.
Hilary	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I don’t think there is a clear level of understanding about what these terms mean in practice, except that “anti” is a strong word. It is proactive’.
Gita	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘Probably it would be mostly “anti-oppressive”. I don’t know. I’m torn between “ADP” and “AOP”’.
Donna	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see them as more or less the same, as addressing issues of power. I use them interchangeably, although I see “anti-oppressive practice” as being much more down to earth’.
Candy	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I use both of these terms. I see “anti-oppressive practice” as more all-encompassing’.
Theresa	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see these terms as different. “Anti-discriminatory practice” refers to a particular piece of work, where you see disadvantage occurring. “Anti-oppressive practice” is very proactive, working to support oppressed groups’.
Olive	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see them as different. “Anti-oppressive practice” means focusing on issues of power at the institutional level. “Anti-discriminatory practice” means focusing more on the personal bits or on certain groups being discriminated against’.
Ruth	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I feel comfortable with both terms’.

Table App.4.2. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘anti-oppressive’.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Angela	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I prefer anti-oppressive practice but use different terms in different contexts. I try to be strategic. “Anti” is more proactive than “non-discriminatory”, the Department’s term.’
Liza	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘“Anti-oppressive practice” covers everything. Oppression is oppression. “Anti-discriminatory practice” tends to be related to Black issues and forgets the rest’.
Amy	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘“Anti-oppressive practice” is more encompassing. But if I am writing something for the Department I would use “non-discriminatory” because it is policy in the Department’.
Helen	‘Anti-oppressive practice’	‘It just covers everything’.

Elsie	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use "anti-oppressive practice" as a blanket term'.
Cindy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'This is the term used by CCETSW and universities, so I tend to use it. It opens up far more for discussion than "non-discriminatory", which I have to use at work'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use this term "anti-oppressive practice" rather than "ADP" because we are all discriminatory. The whole service is set up to discriminate. "AOP" is about power'.
Zina	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'"Anti-oppressive practice" is about not oppressing any client. I feel comfortable with this term'.
Denise	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I feel "anti-oppressive practice" covers all forms of discrimination'.

Table App.4.3. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: 'anti-discriminatory'.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Iris	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'I believe that as an agency we do discriminate against certain groups of people, "anti- discrimination" counteracts this, but at work I have to use "non-discriminatory practice", and I find it really frustrating'.
Gaye	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'If I'm honest I don't think I have worked out the differences in using these terms. I tend to use "anti-discriminatory practice". It's a more proactive term to counteract discrimination in every sense. It's more political'.
Anita	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'"Anti-discriminatory practice" covers everything'.

Table App.4.4. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: 'B' Social Services Department.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Angela	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I prefer anti-oppressive practice but use different terms in different contexts. I try to be strategic. "Anti" is more proactive than "non -discriminatory", the Department's term'.
Amy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'"Anti-oppressive practice" is more encompassing. But if I am writing something for the department I would use "non-discriminatory" because it is policy in the department.
Cindy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'This is the term used by CCETSW and universities, so I tend to use it. It opens up far more discussion than "non-discriminatory", which I have to use at work
Iris	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'I believe that as an agency we do discriminate against certain groups of people. "Anti- discrimination" counteracts this, but at work I have to use "non-discriminatory practice", and I find it really frustrating.

Table App.4.5. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘C’ Social Services Department.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Candy	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I use both of these terms. I see “anti-oppressive practice” as more all-encompassing’.
Donna	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see them as more or less the same, as addressing issues of power. I use them interchangeably, although I see anti-oppressive practice as being much more down to earth’.
Linda	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I don’t think one term covers everything. I use “anti-oppressive practice” as a generic term for practice and “anti-discriminatory practice” to focus on a particular aspect of practice’.
Olive	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see them as different. “Anti-oppressive practice” means focusing on issues of power at the institutional level. “Anti-discriminatory practice” means focusing more on the personal bits or on certain groups being discriminated against’.
Denise	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I feel “anti-oppressive practice” covers all forms of discrimination’.
Janis	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I use this term “anti-oppressive practice” rather than “ADP” because we are all discriminatory. The whole service is set up to discriminate. “AOP” is about power’.

Table App.4.6. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘A’ Social Services Department.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Gita	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘Probably, it would be mostly “anti-oppressive”. I don’t know. I’m torn between “ADP” and “AOP”.
Hilary	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I don’t think there is a clear level of understanding about what these terms mean in practice, except that “anti-” is a strong word. It is proactive’.
Ruth	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’ and ‘anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I feel comfortable with both terms’.
Theresa	‘Anti-discriminatory practice and anti-oppressive practice’.	‘I see these terms as different. “Anti-discriminatory practice” refers to a particular piece of work, where you see disadvantage occurring. “Anti-oppressive practice” is very proactive, working to support oppressed groups’.
Gaye	‘Anti-discriminatory practice’.	‘If I’m honest I don’t think I have worked out the differences in using these terms. I tend to use “anti-discriminatory practice”. It’s a more proactive term to counteract discrimination in every sense. It’s more political’.
Elsie	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	I use “anti-oppressive practice” as a blanket term’.
Liza	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	““Anti-oppressive practice” covers everything. Oppression is oppression. “Anti-discriminatory practice” tends to be related to Black issues and forgets the rest’.
Zina	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	““Anti-oppressive practice” is about not oppressing any client. I feel comfortable with this term’.

Anita	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	"Anti-discriminatory practice" covers everything'.
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'It just covers evrything'. It tells you exactly what you are doing'.

Table App.4.7 Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms by Black women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Donna	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see them as more or less the same, as addressing issues of power. I use them interchangeably, although I see "anti-oppressive practice" as being much more down to earth'.
Hilary	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I don't think there is a clear level of understanding about what these terms mean in practice, except that "anti-" is a strong word. It is pro-active'.
Olive	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see them as different. "Anti-oppressive practice" means focusing on issues of power at the institutional level. "Anti-discriminatory practice" means focusing more on the personal bits or on certain groups being discriminated against'.
Zina	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" is about not oppressing any client'. I feel comfortable with this term'.

Table App.4.8 Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms by white women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Linda	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I don't think one term covers everything. I use "anti-oppressive practice" as a generic term for practice and "anti-discriminatory practice" to focus on a particular aspect of practice'.
Gita	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'Probably it would be mostly "anti-oppressive". I don't know. I'm torn between "ADP" and "AOP"'.
Candy	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use both of these terms. I see "anti-oppressive practice" as more all-encompassing'.
Theresa	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see these terms as different. "Anti-discriminatory practice" refers to a particular piece of work, where you see disadvantage occurring. "Anti-oppressive practice" is very pro-active, working to support oppressed groups'.
Ruth	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I feel comfortable with both terms'.
Angela	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I prefer anti-oppressive practice but use different terms in different contexts. I try to be strategic. "Anti" is more pro-active than "non-discriminatory", the Department's term.'
Amy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" is more encompassing. But if I am writing something for the Department I would use "non-discriminatory" because it is policy in the Department'.
Elsie	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use "anti-oppressive practice" as a blanket term'.

Cindy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'This is the term used by CCETSW and universities, so I tend to use it. It opens up far more for discussion than "non-discriminatory", which I have to use at work'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use this term "anti-oppressive practice" rather than "ADP" because we are all discriminatory. The whole service is set up to discriminate. "AOP" is about power'.
Denise	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I feel "anti-oppressive practice" covers all forms of discrimination'.
Iris	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'I believe that as an agency we do discriminate against certain groups of people, "anti-discrimination" counteracts this, but at work I have to use "non-discriminatory practice", and I find it really frustrating'.
Gaye	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'If I'm honest I don't think I have worked out the differences in using these terms. I tend to use "anti-discriminatory practice". It's a more proactive term to counteract discrimination in every sense. It's more political'.
Anita	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'"Anti-discriminatory practice" covers everything'.
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'It jsu covers everything'.

Table App.4.9. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms by lesbian social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Angela	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I prefer anti-oppressive practice but use different terms in different contexts. I try to be strategic. "Anti" is more pro-active than "non-discriminatory", the Department's term.'
Denise	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I feel "anti-oppressive practice" covers all forms of discrimination'.

Table App.4.10. Terms used to refer to practice in relation to social divisions and reasons given for the choice of those terms by heterosexual women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Linda	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I don't think one term covers everything. I use "anti-oppressive practice" as a generic term for practice and "anti-discriminatory practice" to focus on a particular aspect of practice'.
Hilary	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I don't think there is a clear level of understanding about what these terms mean in practice, except that "anti" is a strong word. It is proactive'.
Gita	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'Probably it would be mostly "anti-oppressive". I don't know. I'm torn between "ADP" and "AOP"'.
Donna	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see them as more or less the same, as addressing issues of power. I use them interchangeably, although I see "anti-oppressive practice" as being much more down to earth'.
Candy	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use both of these terms. I see "anti-oppressive practice" as more all-encompassing'.

Theresa	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see these terms as different. "Anti-discriminatory practice" refers to a particular piece of work, where you see disadvantage occurring. "Anti-oppressive practice" is very pro-active, working to support oppressed groups'.
Olive	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I see them as different. "Anti-oppressive practice" means focusing on issues of power at the institutional level. "Anti-discriminatory practice" means focusing more on the personal bits or on certain groups being discriminated against'.
Ruth	'Anti-discriminatory practice' and 'anti-oppressive practice'.	'I feel comfortable with both terms'.
Liza	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" covers everything. Oppression is oppression. "Anti-discriminatory practice" tends to be related to Black issues and forgets the rest'.
Amy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" is more encompassing. But if I am writing something for the Department I would use "non-discriminatory" because it is policy in the Department'.
Elsie	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use "anti-oppressive practice" as a blanket term'.
Cindy	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'This is the term used by CCETSW and universities, so I tend to use it. It opens up far more for discussion than "non-discriminatory", which I have to use at work'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'I use this term "anti-oppressive practice" rather than "ADP" because we are all discriminatory. The whole service is set up to discriminate. "AOP" is about power'.
Zina	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" is about not oppressing any client. I feel comfortable with this term'.
Iris	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'I believe that as an agency we do discriminate against certain groups of people, "anti-discrimination" counteracts this, but at work I have to use "non-discriminatory practice", and I find it really frustrating'.
Gaye	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	'If I'm honest I don't think I have worked out the differences in using these terms. I tend to use "anti-discriminatory practice". It's a more proactive term to counteract discrimination in every sense. It's more political'.
Anita	'Anti-discriminatory practice'.	"Anti-discriminatory practice" covers everything'.
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'It just covers everything'.

Table App.4.11. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: 'anti-oppressive practice'.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" covers everything'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'All my work falls under "anti-oppressive practice". I would class any kind of work as "anti-oppressive practice"'

Table App.4.12. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: terms referring to ‘women’.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Liza	‘Women’s perspectives’.	‘It covers everything concerned with women’.
Denise	‘Women’s perspectives’.	‘It covers all aspects of the oppression of women’.
Linda	‘Women-centred’.	‘It acknowledges that I bring a woman’s standpoint to the work I do’.
Olive	‘Women-centred’ or ‘womanism’.	‘These terms cover all women’.
Donna	‘Women’s issues’.	‘It’s my standard term. It covers everything’.
Elsie	‘Women’s issues’.	‘It covers everything’.

Table App.4.13. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: terms referring to ‘gender’.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Iris	‘Gender issues’.	‘It encompasses a lot of things and is not just about being a woman’.
Gita	‘Gender issues’.	‘I don’t really know why. It’s just the term that comes to mind’.
Theresa	‘Gender issues’.	‘It seems to be the best way of thinking about cases’.
Hilary	‘Gender issues’.	{Unable to give a reason}
Zina	‘Gender issues’.	‘I feel comfortable with this term’.
Anita	‘Gender awareness’.	‘I would probably use this term’.
Ruth	‘Gender awareness’.	‘I feel comfortable with this term’.
Cindy	‘Gender awareness’.	“‘Gender awareness’ covers issues in my work related to men and women’.

Table App.4.14. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘sexism’.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Gaye	‘Sexism’.	‘It describes oppression against women’.
Amy	‘Sexism’.	‘I would probably use this term if something was overtly that way’.

Table App.4.15. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘feminist’.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Angela	‘Feminist’.	‘I’m a feminist’.
Candy	‘Feminist’.	‘I consider myself to be a feminist’.

Table App.4.16. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: ‘B’ Social Services Department.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Angela	‘Feminist’.	‘I’m a feminist’.
Amy	‘Sexism’.	‘I would probably use this term if something was overtly that way’.

Cindy	'Gender awareness'.	"Gender awareness" covers issues in my work related to men and women'.
Iris	'Gender issues'.	'It encompasses a lot of things and is not just about being a woman'.

Table App.4.17. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: 'C' Social Services Department.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Candy	'Feminist'.	'I consider myself to be a feminist'.
Denise	'Women's perspectives'.	'It covers all aspects of the oppression of women'.
Linda	'Women-centred'.	'It acknowledges that I bring a woman's standpoint to the work I do'.
Olive	'Women-centred' or 'womanism'.	'These terms cover all women'.
Donna	'Women's issues'.	'It's my standard term. It covers everything'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'All my work falls under "anti-oppressive practice". I would class any kind of work as "anti-oppressive practice"'

Table App.4.18. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: 'A' Social Services Department.

Name	Term used	Reasons
Anita	'Gender awareness'.	'I would probably use this term'.
Elsie	I would probably use the term women's issues.	'It covers everything'.
Gaye	'Sexism'.	'It describes oppression against women'.
Gita	'Gender issues'.	'I don't really know why. It's just the term that comes to mind'.
Theresa	'Gender issues'.	'It seems to be the best way of thinking about cases'.
Hilary	'Gender issues'.	{Unable to give a reason}
Zina	'Gender issues'.	'I feel comfortable with this term'.
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" covers everything'.
Liza	'Women's perspectives'.	'It covers everything concerned with women'.
Ruth	'Gender awareness'.	'I feel comfortable with this term'.

Table App.4.19. Terms used to refer to practice which is concerned with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms by Black women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Donna	'Women's issues'.	'It's my standard term. It covers everything'.
Hilary	'Gender issues'.	{Unable to give a reason}
Olive	'Women-centred' or 'womanism'.	'These terms cover all women'.
Zina	'Gender issues'.	'I feel comfortable with this term'.

Table App.4.20. Terms used to refer to practice which is concerned with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms by Black women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Donna	‘Women’s issues’.	‘It’s my standard term. It covers everything’.
Hilary	‘Gender issues’.	{Unable to give a reason}
Olive	‘Women-centred’ or ‘womanism’.	‘These terms cover all women’.
Zina	‘Gender issues’.	‘I feel comfortable with this term’.

Table App.4.21. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms by white women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Helen	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	“‘Anti-oppressive practice’ covers everything’.
Janis	‘Anti-oppressive practice’.	‘All my work falls under “anti-oppressive practice”. I would class any kind of work as “anti-oppressive practice”’.
Liza	‘Women’s perspectives’.	‘It covers everything concerned with women’.
Denise	‘Women’s perspectives’.	‘It covers all aspects of the oppression of women’.
Linda	‘Women-centred’.	‘It acknowledges that I bring a woman’s standpoint to the work I do’.
Elsie	‘Women’s issues’.	‘It covers everything’.
Iris	‘Gender issues’.	‘It encompasses a lot of things and is not just about being a woman’.
Gita	‘Gender issues’.	‘I don’t really know why. It’s just the term that comes to mind’.
Theresa	‘Gender issues’.	‘It seems to be the best way of thinking about cases’.
Anita	‘Gender awareness’.	‘I would probably use this term’.
Ruth	‘Gender awareness’.	‘I feel comfortable with this term’.
Cindy	‘Gender awareness’.	“‘Gender awareness’ covers issues in my work related to men and women’.
Gaye	‘Sexism’.	‘It describes oppression against women’.
Amy	‘Sexism’.	‘I would probably use this term if something was overtly that way’.
Angela	‘Feminist’.	‘I’m a feminist’.
Candy	‘Feminist’.	‘I consider myself to be a feminist’.

Table App.4.22. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms: lesbian social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Angela	‘Feminist’.	‘I’m a feminist’.
Denise	‘Women’s perspectives’.	‘It covers all aspects of the oppression of women’.

Table App.4.23. Terms used to refer to practice with women and reasons given for the choice of those terms by heterosexual women social workers.

Name	Term(s) used	Reasons for use
Helen	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	"Anti-oppressive practice" covers everything'.
Janis	'Anti-oppressive practice'.	'All my work falls under "anti-oppressive practice". I would class any kind of work as "anti-oppressive practice".'
Liza	'Women's perspectives'.	'It covers everything concerned with women'.
Linda	'Women-centred'.	'It acknowledges that I bring a woman's standpoint to the work I do'.
Olive	'Women-centred' or 'womanism'.	'These terms cover all women'.
Donna	'Women's issues'.	'It's my standard term. It covers everything'.
Elsie	'Women's issues'.	'It covers everything'.
Iris	'Gender issues'.	'It encompasses a lot of things and is not just about being a woman'.
Gita	'Gender issues'.	'I don't really know why. It's just the term that comes to mind'.
Theresa	'Gender issues'.	'It seems to be the best way of thinking about cases'.
Hilary	'Gender issues'.	{Unable to give a reason}
Zina	'Gender issues'.	'I feel comfortable with this term'.
Anita	'Gender awareness'.	'I would probably use this term'.
Ruth	'Gender awareness'.	'I feel comfortable with this term'.
Cindy	'Gender awareness'.	"Gender awareness" covers issues in my work related to men and women'.
Gaye	'Sexism'.	'It describes oppression against women'.
Amy	'Sexism'.	'I would probably use this term if something was overtly that way'.
Candy	'Feminist'.	'I consider myself to be a feminist'.

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